DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 227 483 CS 207 375

AUTHOR	Huck, Charlotte S., Ed.; And Others
TITLE	Children's Literature.
INSTITUTION	Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE	82
NOTE	105p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Ohio State University, "Theory into Practice," 149 Arps Hall, Columbus, OH 43210 ($4.50, discount given).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Theory into Practice; v21 n4 Aut 1982
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescent Literature; *Authors; *Childhood Attitudes; *Childrens Literature; History; Instructional Improvement; Literacy; Literary Styles; Literature Appreciation; Reading Attitudes; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Interests; *Theories
IDENTIFIERS	*Reader Text Relationship; Theory Development

ABSTRACT

The articles in this special journal issue focusing on children's literature were drawn from papers presented at the Conference on Children's Literature held in 1982 at The Ohio State University. The first section contains articles that address the question "What makes a good children's book?" The question is approached from a historical perspective by a librarian and scholar, from a critic's standpoint, and from an editor's point of view. The section concludes with four brief position papers on the subject prepared by an author of children's books, two editors, and a librarian. Articles in the second section of the journal deal with the question "What is the child's view of a good book?" Contributors to this section present a theoretical perspective on the relation between reader and text, an account of ethnographic studies of children's books in the classroom, and suggestions for a theory of children's literature that would include not only what is known about literature but what is known about children and learning to read. Articles in the third section discuss the relationship between literature and literacy and explore how an insight about children and literature can be used to form classroom instruction. The journal concludes with personal accounts by authors and illustrators. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED227483

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Theory into Practice v21 n4 Autumn 1982

Guest Editors: Charlotte S. Huck
Janet Hickman
Frank Zidonis

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Charles M. Galloway

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS207375

Theory Into Practice

238 **This Issue: Children's Literature**

239 **"Which One's the Mockingbird?" Children's Literature from the 1920s to the Present**
Sheila Egoff

247 **"Go, and Catch a Falling Star": What *Is* a Good Children's Book?**
Ethel L. Heins

254 **An Editor's View: Recognizing the Best**
Jean Karl

262 **Defining a Good Children's Book:**
A Task Doomed by Stephen Roxburgh
Something That Makes Childhood Less Lonely by Charlotte Zolotow
Believing Impossible Things by Madeleine L'Engle
Discovering Good (New) Books through a Discussion Format by Ginny Moore Kruse

268 **The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response**
Louise M. Rosenblatt

278 **"The Book Was Okay. I Love You" — Social Aspects of Response to Literature**
Susan I. Hepler
Janet Hickman

284 **What Counts as Evidence in Theories of Children's Literature?**
Margaret Meek

293 **Shared Book Experience: Teaching Reading Using Favorite Books**
Don Holdaway

301 **Retellings of Literature and the Comprehension Process**
Yetta M. Goodman

308 **Reading Begins at Home**
Dorothy Butler

315 **"I Give You the End of a Golden String"**
Charlotte S. Huck

322 **Birthdays and Beginnings**
Arnold Lobel

325 **The Aim of the Writer Who Writes for Children**
Katherine Paterson

332 **Subject to Change without Notice**
Madeleine L'Engle

Guest Editors: Charlotte S. Huck, Janet Hickman, and Frank Zidonis

The papers which appear in this issue were given at the May 1982 Conference on Children's Literature, held at The Ohio State University in honor of Professor Charlotte S. Huck on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the College of Education. — C. M. G.

This Issue

Ever since the Dartmouth Seminar in 1966, which brought together teachers of English from all over North America and England, representing all levels of teaching from the primary school through the university, I have wished to have a similar conference with those who share a scholarly interest in children's literature but who represent different professional perspectives and seldom have an opportunity to exchange ideas. The celebration of the College of Education's 75th anniversary year provided the impetus and the means for fulfilling that wish.

The Conference on Children's Literature at The Ohio State University took place in May 1982. It was divided into two parts: The Symposium of Scholars who met for 2½ days, immediately followed by the Festival of Children's Literature, which began Friday evening and met all day Saturday. Some 250 persons attended the symposium, including authors, critics, editors, librarians, teachers, and university professors and researchers. Speakers and participants came from England, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and throughout the United States.

Over 750 persons filled every seat in Weigel Hall for the festival to hear award-winning authors and an illustrator of children's books. Participants also had their choice of attending two or three smaller sessions, many of them led by practicing teachers who spoke on the way they share literature in their classrooms.

The papers in this issue of *TIP* were given at the conference, and they are presented here, with minor exceptions, in the same sequence in which they were heard. Four basic questions formed the structure of the symposium. The first and most perplexing question, "What makes a good children's book?" was discussed from the historical perspective of a librarian and scholar, then from a critic's standpoint and an editor's view. The brief position statements following—from an author, two editors, and a librarian—served to begin a lively and sometimes heated exchange of ideas about what constitutes a "good" book.

"What is the child's view of a good book?" was a question that narrowed the focus of the discussion. A theoretical perspective on the relation between reader and text and an account of ethnographic studies of children and books in the classroom were presented in this section. The paper that followed proposed some suggestions for a theory of children's literature that would include not only what is known about literature but what is known about children and learning to read.

The next day's topics, "What is the relationship between literature and literacy?" and "How can insight about children and literature inform classroom practice?" extended this concern with the learner. The research and rich personal experiences offered in these talks were complemented by a display of children's work and a round table discussion of teachers and librarians who talked about the way they made literature central to the language curriculum in their own schools.

Three papers from the festival proceedings complete this issue. Two are accounts of book creators at work, and the last affirms the value of literature in a rapidly changing world.

While all papers give the content of the talks, it is hard to capture the enthusiasm of the group, the real meeting of minds, and the reshaping of viewpoints as new perspectives were encountered and explored. In the end, the most important question under scrutiny at the conference was the one individual participants were asking themselves: How can I put these ideas to work in my own situation? It is my hope that readers of this issue will come to share both the enthusiasm and the concerns of those who attended this conference.

Charlotte S. Huck

Sheila Egoff

"Which One's the Mockingbird?" Children's Literature from the 1920s to the Present

You will remember Randall Jarrell's (1964) little bat-poet. After listening to and observing the mockingbird, he began to wonder what was real and what was mimicry. Was a mockingbird sounding like a thrush as real as a thrush? "Which one's the mockingbird? which one's the world?" he asked. This article is, in a way, an echo of the bat-poet's question in terms of children's literature, although not, I'm sorry to say, with his poetic expression. In considering the changes in writing and approach over the last 60 years, I have tried to ask myself: which writers have coasted on a surface realism and which have portrayed life with an inner consistency of reality; or which books are marketable commodities only and which have the power to stir the imagination?

Although it was suggested to me that I begin with the 1920s, any chronological overview has to acknowledge the major children's writers of the late Victorian age—Lewis Carroll, Louisa May Alcott, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, Mrs. Ewing, Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, to name but a few. For it was out of this era that came the most original view of children's literature ever propounded, namely, that children's literature could, indeed, be literature. This idea that children's books could be more than vehicles for instruction, information, and moral persuasion was so startling, as can be seen in retrospect, that all other changes since, and there have been drastic ones, simply pale before it.

Sheila Egoff is professor of Librarianship at the University of British Columbia and editor of Only Connect.

In demonstrating that children's literature could be literature, the Victorians also flashed signals about judging it. Style was obviously important; language put to its best purpose, used at its utmost power. But even more importantly, the Victorian classics show the greatest and most enduring quality of literature, its link with life. It is this quality that makes us respond to all great literature from the Iliad and the Odyssey to the fine books of our own time. The Victorians *were* interested in the imponderables of life—death, resurrection, faith and disbelief, moral courage and moral cowardice, trust and suspicion, as well as in life's more readily observable aspects—poverty, cruelty, the fruits of friendship, and doing one's duty. And, believe it or not, the protagonists in these Victorian children's books did mature and come to terms with life. I admit that this maturation process sometimes isn't as noticeable as in many modern books, but that is because these older writers made more use of a sense of real time than modern ones. For example, in Isabelle Holland's *Summer of My First Love* (1981), the protagonist meets a young man, falls in love with him, has an affair, gets pregnant, and has a miscarriage all in the space of an eight weeks' summer vacation. One has to admit that life has speeded up since Victorian times, but here the author simply cranks the camera faster; she doesn't take the time to let the incidents assume some importance. In the earlier books the growing up doesn't all happen on the last page! Mind you, some modern authors can compress time and make us believe it all really happened. Ivan Southall's

Josh (1972) takes place in four days, but Southall's characterization of Josh is so well done that we not only know where he came from but we get more than an inkling of what he will be like as an adult.

However, the Victorians imposed a caveat upon themselves. The content was to be kept within the comprehension of children, which necessitated a greater rather than a lesser skill. They couldn't use sex, for example, to interest the young reader—no rape scenes, not even spying on girls undressing. They had to think of other devices. You will remember that in the 1950s C. S. Lewis said he always put a lot about food in his children's books. He felt they were more interested in things to eat than in other bodily facts. If this omission of sex and sexuality can be considered unrealistic, I would also like to suggest that its gratuitous inclusion in many modern books is equally unrealistic. In Paul Zindel's *The Undertaker's Gone Bananas* (1978), Bobby and Lauri are stalked by a psychotic next-door neighbor who murders his wife and girlfriend. Not believed by the police, the couple set out to reveal Mr. Hulka and his crimes. Their adventures include hiding in a coffin, discovering a stabbed body in a hammock, opening a television set to discover a severed torso, watching Mr. Hulka dispose of his wife's body in the river, and racing around in a Volkswagen with a dead body on the top of the car. Incredible as it may seem, these events occur in a 12-hour period, and despite Lauri's trauma (she is afraid of fire) and adventures, Zindel constantly has her moaning:

> Why don't you take me in your arms and kiss me and make believe we're just a plain old normal boy and girl who could fall in love with each other if we gave each other half a chance? (p. 187).

Sometimes I wonder about the so-called "new realism." What the Victorians chiefly put into their books were plots that did not call for such a suspension of disbelief.

In mentioning the Victorian classics, and indeed any fine children's books published before the 1970s and 1980s, I should say here that I have no wish to kidnap them into our own era. It seems to me that today we have become so mesmerized by the word "relevant" that we have lost confidence in the power of literature to weave its own magic. As our Canadian critic, Northrop Frye, says, there are always two things about writers—what they meant to their own time and what they mean to us. If we concentrate solely on what they mean to us, then we are turning them into modern writers, which they are not. If we keep in mind that they were writing for quite a different era, with different standards and assumptions, then that is the liberalizing element in our reading, introducing us to a host of experiences we don't get from the literature of our own time and yet which connect to our own time because they connect with life.

As the French critic, Taine, has pointed out, a book has to be judged by its time, its milieu, and its nationality. In books for children we not only have to take into account the writers' view of life, but also their view of childhood. Both Katherine Paterson and Robert Cormier write out of the same nation, the same milieu, and the same time. But how different is their attitude toward the young. Cormier writes of tortured children, subjected to intolerable pressure, and who go under; Paterson writes of children who have trials and tribulations, but who pull through to a celebration of life. Is one more real than the other? I doubt if any novel can really convey real life. In children's literature, although it may be the child in the adult writing the book, it is certainly not the child alone. The book must reflect the author's adult biases, theories, memories, and imagination; therefore, most children's books and especially most so-called realistic novels of childhood can only be one person's reflection of childhood.

In most definable eras of children's literature there are two different strands of writing going on at the same time. For example, during the 200 years of the dreary religious and moral tale, the folk and fairy tales were constantly rewritten and republished in the format of little chapbooks which spread throughout the English-speaking world. The Victorian period saw the rise and popularity of the boys' magazines which were based on larger-than-life adventures; "bloods," as they were called.

Post World War I Years

The post-World War I years followed the same pattern. In England, of course, there was a natural decline in writing and publishing as an effect of the war. But another effect of the war was a loosening of the restrictions of childhood. This became obvious in the flood of girls' boarding school stories, a domain that had hitherto been dominated by boys. As exemplified by such writers as Angela Brazil, May Wynne, Elsie Oxenham, and particularly the

magazines published for girls, such as *The School Friend* (1919-1929), we see girls emerging from the hearth and home to which they had been pretty well confined by Victorian and Edwardian domestic stories. It is certainly true that most girls of the middle class went to boarding school, and so these stories have some claim to realism. Logically, too, the schoolgirls take on all the attributes of the schoolboys. They are healthy and hearty; they value honor, fair play, courage, and friendship. There is some indication that the girls moved with the times; clothes, manners, conversations gradually take on the tone of the '20s as reported in the women's magazines. But these books are merely the surface realism of the time. The writers of the period turned the girls into stereotypes: the serious head girl, the clown, and the clever but disagreeable girl. *The School Friend* even introduces the jolly fat girl who, of course, turns out to be Billy Bunter's sister Bessie.

This, of course, is merely a ring of change on the good child and the bad child whom we met in the early moral tales. The writers of these school stories did not have to develop their characters; they just had to make them react predictably to any situation. Creativity in writing didn't enter the picture; it was a matter of writing efficiency. These school stories were popular at the time, and one might well speculate about the social effect they had on girls' lives. My guess is that they had very little and my guess is premised on the fact that most formula writing is basically conservative; formula books promise more than they deliver. I would suspect that *Little Women* has had more genuine impact on girls than all those English school stories put together. Again, what formula writers do is predict the readers' tastes; and by falling in with them they ensure themselves to a large extent against criticism. So we cannot expect such books to "break barriers" either in the prevailing mores of the time or stylistically. But perhaps the most important point about this mass market writing is that it occurs in every stage in the history of children's literature, except for the 1940s and the 1950s.

In terms of genuine children's literature emerging from England at this time, the period marks its lowest ebb. By 1930 George Orwell, who was working in a London bookshop at the time, complained that "modern books for children are rather horrible things, when you see them in the mass. Personally I would sooner give a child a copy of Petronius Arbiter than *Peter Pan,* but even Barrie seems manly and wholesome compared with some of his later imitators" (1968, p. 244). Yet there are three English writers of the period who still claim our attention. By the way, don't be surprised to hear me leap into genres other than realistic fiction; reality is the basis of all fiction, even the most fantastic. A. A. Milne's two books of verse and *Winnie the Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928) were all written in the 20s. *Winnie the Pooh,* like Jean de Brunhoff's *Babar* (1954), has frequently been attacked by hard-nosed critics as bourgeois and sentimental. However, I think some critics forget that Milne wrote about humanized *toy* animals, not humanized *real* animals, which is the reason that Pooh and his friends are so one-dimensional. I find it a story of sentiment rather than sentimentality; anyone who has tried to put a child to bed when a stuffed toy is missing comes closer to an understanding of *Winnie the Pooh.* You will have noticed that in the popular TV program, MASH, nobody laughs when Radar O'Reilly goes to bed with his stuffed teddy bear, and if they do, it's an understanding, recalling laugh. The genius of *Winnie the Pooh,* I think, lies in three aspects. It's a light book of genuine quality; Milne hasn't an iota of a message to deliver. This is why it is so easy to make fun of it. No one would dare write a take-off called *The Wind in the Willows Whirlwind* (as we have had *The Pooh Perplex*) because Kenneth Grahame's (1908) book is too multidimensional to be made fun of. Then there's the style. Milne was a professional writer and *Winnie the Pooh* is a crafted, stylistic, quotable book. Who can forget Pooh as he is trapped by his greediness? "Will you please read a Sustaining Book, such as will comfort a Wedged Bear in great Tightness." But above all there is Milne's ability to let the children keep ahead of the events, to see themselves as smarter than the animals. If it isn't realistic to pat a child on the head once in a while, then we had better leave child-rearing to robots.

Walter de la Mare spans several decades; his *Songs of Childhood* appeared in 1902, *Peacock Pie* in 1913, and *Poems for Children* in 1930. But by the 1920s and 1930s I think he was recognized for what he was—a genuine children's poet, as opposed to a writer of verses. He remained the only children's poet until the 1970s, but I think he will outlive most contemporary poets for children for his sheer musicality. His poems cry out to be lifted off the pages and chanted. In comparison with such early versifiers as Rachel Field, Eugene Field, Robert Louis Stevenson, A. A. Milne, and a host of

others, he was never saccharine, coy, or condescending.

The third major writer of this English period was Hugh Lofting, also under attack nowadays, this time for racism. The Dr. Dolittle books came out of Lofting's experiences in the trenches of World War I, from his reflection on the part horses played in the war. He said, "But obviously to develop a horse surgery as good as that of our Casualty Clearing Station would necessitate a knowledge of horse language." (Quoted in Townsend, 1965, p. 167.) And so the animal doctor was born. The eminent English critic, Edward Blishen, has written of the Dr. Dolittle books that "in their rambling amplitude, their very unevenness, they are like life itself, and children can live in them in a most generous sense" (Townsend, 1965, p. 167). *Dr. Dolittle's Return* (1933) anticipates much of modern science fiction as the doctor, back from the moon, fears that "all life faces a losing game down here with us," and he is preoccupied with ways of forming "a new and balanced world." Yet, his Prince Bumpo who is black begs the doctor to make him white. This was not an unusual viewpoint for the time. Remember the great 18th century English poet, William Blake, who wrote, "I am black, but O my soul is white" (1966, p. 46). When Lofting wrote the Dr. Dolittle books, the British Empire spanned a quarter of the globe and the British were colored by the assumption of "the white man's burden." It was a view that persisted even in American children's literature up until the 1960s at least. Most of the writers unconsciously revealed their feeling that under that black skin there was a white child waiting to burst out. The idea that different is beautiful took a long time in coming. In all of this I have often wondered why the *Bobbsey Twins* (Hope, 1904-1980) with their racial stereotypes are still stuffing the shelves of our libraries, and I can only conclude that a junky book does not rouse as much antagonism as a fine piece of writing that has some flaws.

However, in terms of freshness, enthusiasm, and genuine development in children's literature, the 20s and the 30s chiefly belong to the United States. Trying to take one point at a time, which is difficult since in a sense everything happened at once, we see first of all technical progress and the development of mass production in which the United States was to lead the world. In looking at children's books in toto at this period, what one observes first is the increase in the mass marketing of children's books in the form of commercial series books. From the advertisements in the back of the numerous series books from this period, one gets the impression that they flooded North America. These series books have their roots in the idealization of the young which began about the turn of the century, but which is intensified by the war years 1914 to 1918. I give you Clair W. Hayes's *The Boy Allies* (1915) (one of an American series), two American boys who, in case you have forgotten, won the war almost single-handedly. At 18 years of age they have fought with the Belgians, the British, the French, and the Russians and have been decorated by all four.

The Boy Allies was published in 1915; but by the 20s such series books had taken on, again, at least a surface realism. For the most part they portrayed the American spirit of inventiveness, interest in technology, and good old "American know-how," which is not to be despised. So we have *The Aeroplane Boys* (Langworthy, 1912), *The Radio Boys* (Breckenridge, 1912), *The Motor Boys* (Young, 1909), *The Golden Boys* (Wyman, 1922) (they were interested in electricity), and so on. One major point about this spate of publishing is that it was almost equally matched by girls' books of the same type. So we have *The Aeroplane Girls, The Radio Girls* (Penrose, 1922), *The Motor Girls* (Penrose, 1910), *The Girl Scouts* (Garis, 1920). Girls were everywhere: *In Moving Pictures, At College, In the Great Northwest, Treasure Hunting, In the Far North* (Emerson, 1916, 1917, 1921, 1923, 1924), and so on. It is interesting to speculate why these books disappeared so quickly while other such commercial series books as *Nancy Drew* (Keene, 1930-1980), and the *Hardy Boys* (Dixon, 1934-1979) have lingered into our own time, when they have no claim at all to a link with life. The answer, I think, lies in technical progress as a background. The rapid advance of technology dated them very quickly, while the Nancy Drews and the Hardy Boys were premised on a more exploitative emotion—that of wish fulfillment, which is never dated. We do hold on to illusions.

But there were other forces at work besides these formula books. In the 1920s and 1930s, the world of children's literature swirled around a group of remarkable women—critics such as Caroline Hewins, Bertha Mahoney, and May Lamberton Becker; children's book editors such as May Massee and Helen Dean Fish; but above all, I think, Anne Carroll Moore, head of Work with Children at the New York Public Library. Also, of course, after World War I came a flood of immigration to the

United States and among their company were many talented authors, artists, and artisans. The chief point I wish to make here is that you really don't have a recognizable literature until you have a recognizable body of criticism. The writers and artists of the period, particularly in the 1930s, had some mentors who could recognize talent, and, most importantly, who could and would take the time to develop talent. And what a group they turned out to be, particularly in the area of the picture book which had its first American flowering. Mixing up both the 1920s and 1930s and the immigrants and the native-born artists, there were: Wanda Gag, the D'Aulaires, the Petershams, Ludwig Bemelmans, Marjorie Flack, James Daugherty, Robert Lawson, Margaret Wise Brown, Lynd Ward, and many, many more. In spite of the extraordinary changes that have taken place in the picture book, all these works are still in print and flourishing in our libraries. I find it more than of passing interest that these books resemble to a very high degree the modern picture books that are popular, really popular, with today's children, namely those by John Burningham, Helen Oxenbury, James Marshall, Bernard Waber, Mercer Mayer, and the Lobels, among others. They all share the qualities of warmth and humor; they portray real situations; and they convey a sense of realism lightly touched with fantasy, and above all, security—all aspects of life that are as real as many of today's therapeutic picture books dealing with death, divorce, and disappearing parents.

But back to Anne Carroll Moore and criticism. In reading or re-reading such collections of her works as *The Three Owls* (1925) and *Roads to Childhood* (1939), one is struck by her breadth of knowledge and uncanny feeling for the best in all its forms. The books of other countries were not neglected, nor was the past. She did not discard as she moved along; she took the best of literature with her, not in the name of relevance but with such pleasure and insight that even today she sends one flying back to such writers as Howard Pyle, Padraic Colum, Paul Du Chaillu, and Edward Lear. I have wondered what she would think of a generation both of critics and readers who go almost in the opposite direction in an effort to be "with it."

Children of the Depression

What were the children like in this period between the wars and just after World War II? Well, firstly and most obviously, they were children of the depression. In many cases the children worked after school and their earnings, small though they might be, were important to the family income which in turn gave the children a feeling of importance in the family. Pleasures were fewer and had to be actively sought for, and were all the more enjoyable for the seeking. All in all, in comparing pre- and post-World War II children with those of today, one can say that the children of the recent past were more independent, resourceful, and optimistic. And certainly it was these characteristics that all the writers of the finest of children's novels from the 1930s to the 1960s attributed to children. It is true that they were not as sophisticated as the children of today, but sophistication means neither maturity nor wisdom.

The apotheosis of the independent-child approach was, of course, Arthur Ransome, whose books spanned the years from 1930 to 1950. I was working at the Toronto Public Library during the 1940s and I can still remember the excitement engendered in the children by the appearance of a new Ransome book. In the Ransome books we have the between-the-wars and post-war children—healthy, happy, sane, self-reliant, friendly—and yet they aren't prigs in any conceivable way. These children are allowed to go off adventuring without adult supervision, the youngest being only seven years of age. Yet Ransome does not strain our credulity. First of all, the children have been trained in various skills and what they don't know, they soon find out. They pore over maps, charts, plans, books; they can cook over an open fire, mend a net and tickle trout ("Tickle trout?" said a friend of mine. "You made that up." "It's in a Ransome book," I said, "therefore it must be true."). Above all, the children can sail. It has been pointed out to me that you could actually *learn* to sail a boat by reading the Ransome books. It is quickly noticeable, I think, that the children fall into adult patterns as do the children in the Narnia books when they become kings and queens, which was what the society of the time expected from children. Susan, for example, takes on the mother's role. But the point of reality here is that without adult supervision, would anyone allow their children weeks of sailing and camping alone? Susan is an anchor in a world of high adventure that helps the reader believe it really could happen—independence from adult supervision—if Susan will supervise toothbrushing. Before we say how unrealistic this is, we should remember that the young in many modern books take on parent roles, but in a very queasy

sort of way, like the two young people in *The Pigman* (Zindel, 1968). Susan also, I should point out, takes part in all the adventures, thus assuming the double role that is the lot of many a modern woman. The Ransome books are not everybody's cup of tea, but then no book is. What I wish to emphasize is that Ransome has a deeper reality than mere surface exposition. *Swallows and Amazons* (1930), *Swallowdale* (1931), *Coot Club* (1934), and *Great Northern* (1947) are very real books. The Ransome children, who are based on real children, are not just playing; they are, albeit unconsciously, playing at life. As psychologists have pointed out in one way or another, play is the most serious and most important thing a child does. Most modern books, as you have probably noticed, have taken away play because they have taken away plot.

In the 1940s and 1950s, as I have mentioned, there is no great spate of commercial publishing. We still have series books of course, but only the ones that have lingered from the past and are being republished. It is the finest of children's literature that becomes the dominant literature, in the sense that it is widely read, without too much pushing on the part of teachers and librarians. And no wonder with writers such as E. B. White, C. S. Lewis, Scott O'Dell, Eleanor Estes, Lucy Boston, Phillippa Pearce, Rumer Godden, Mary Norton, Pamela Travers, Rosemary Sutcliff, and many others. Like Ransome, these writers followed the dictates of literature as expressed so well by Oscar Wilde: "Literature always anticipates life. It does not *copy* it, but moulds it to its purpose" (1973, p. 983).

Whatever the purpose of these writers, it wasn't overt. I think the reason they escaped didacticism is that they were such genuine storytellers; like the Victorians they concocted strong plots. The shape and inevitability of their stories are due partly to art and partly to an inner consistency that comes from a coherent view of life and a truthful observation of great issues and small details of life. They may only take a slice of it, but within that slice the presentation is whole and clear. They may take readers away from their everyday concerns, but they do not send them back to life dissatisfied. These fine writers of the post-World War II period had another trait in common—they were serious about their subjects, but were never solemn or ponderous. Most of their expressions of life are sifted through a child's experience and understanding. In Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1959), a perfect book, you will remember Tom's Uncle Alan pedantically explaining Time by going from point A to point B. But Tom finally senses the time structure he is involved in by a reference to Rip Van Winkle, and Philippa Pearce tells the story in brief.

I think the most important point about such books as *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952), *The Borrowers* (Norton, 1953), *The Children of Green Knowe* (Boston, 1955), *Tom's Midnight Garden* (Pearce, 1959), *The Eagle of the Ninth* (Sutcliff, 1954), *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1938), *The All-of-a-Kind Family* (Taylor, 1951), and *The Moffats* (Estes, 1941), is that they were first-rate books that were within the average child's reading ability. More than any other group of children's books, they make the point that fine writing does not mean difficult reading. These books could also more genuinely be called children's books in that the protagonists, with few exceptions, were children and not young teenagers.

The Modern Period and the Problem Novel

Before skipping through just a few aspects of the modern period, I'd like to return to the bat-poet and his poem on the mockingbird. In the end he writes:

> He imitates the world he drove away
> So well that for a minute, in the moonlight,
> Which one's the mockingbird? which one's
> the world? (Jarrell, 1964).

This brings me to the American problem novel. When I was discussing this paper with a colleague at the library school at The University of British Columbia, I said I wouldn't know what to do when I got to the era of the American problem novels. "It's just," said I, "that I'm so tired of them and I have opened my mouth more than once on the subject. What would you do?" said I. "Use a bigger stick," said he. Well, I think the one stick I want to use is to say that in the problem novel we have a flock of mockingbirds. It is a case where imitation can be more beguiling than the real thing—like television sit-coms and soap operas. It is the results of such beguilements that concern me here. You will have noticed, of course, that no matter for what age their authors intend them—I know that Paul Zindel's *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball* (1976), and Judy Blume's *Forever* (1975) were intended for the adolescent—they have moved down into the reading of children because of their simplistic style and sensational topics. I am not against the topics per se. My point is that a steady diet

of books that have no descriptive background, no fine use of language, no leisurely pace, no in-depth characterization, that have only problems whose source is rarely explained and denouements that have no extending ripples, do not provide children with the necessary background for reading really fine writers such as Jill Paton Walsh, Alan Garner, Leon Garfield, Virginia Hamilton, Mildred Taylor, and a host of others. It is highly noticeable, in Vancouver at least, that particularly the reading of historical fiction and books in translation has declined to an incredible extent; and the modern writers of fine realism and fantasy aren't exactly runaway best sellers. The mockingbird, as the bat-poet tells us, even drives away the birds he imitates—the territorial imperative—and it is my contention that the problem novel is driving out the better books, just as according to Gresham's law, bad money drives out good money. The problem novel, it seems to me, also has to fit into a very rigid packaging and publishing program, like the new baby Harlequins, our Vancouver name for the new wave of teenage romances. I suspect that many fine children's novels are not accepted for publication because they do not fit into the publishing pattern, a pattern that is as rigid as the old commercial series books of yore.

My suspicion about the fine books of the modern period, i.e. the 1970s and 1980s, is that they have been too much influenced by the problem novel. Intellectually tough as they are, deeply emotional and highly concerned, as are the problem novels, with the maturation process, they too have begun to have a sameness about them and all too frequently can only be read by the young at the height of their reading ability. I refer here particularly to the newer books by such writers as Leon Garfield, Jill Paton Walsh, Katherine Paterson, Virginia Hamilton, Jane Gardam.

It may be argued that many of our finest books aren't realistic. After all, you can say, how many kids are 300-pound outsiders (Virginia Hamilton's *The Planet of Junior Brown*, 1971); how many discover that their cousin is really their brother (Jill Paton Walsh's *Goldengrove*, 1972); how many girls hate their twin sister with ferocity (Katherine Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved*, 1980)? But if such books do not reflect a common experience, such as divorce and sex, they do propound a deep and universal reality, one that is not based on mere verisimilitude.

In *The Bat-Poet* (Jarrell, 1964), it is the little bat who is the creative artist; he struggles and struggles not only to express what he feels, but to find the right words in which to say it. The mockingbird can only mimic what he has heard and doesn't really understand. We are probably always going to be faced with the commercial formula books such as the new Scholastic romances—I understand they can print 80,000 copies of one title—but we have to take care that they do not drive out the real thing, even if we have to run twice as fast to stay in the same place. Formula books such as the Nancy Drew mysteries are completely illusory and, in a way, are not so troublesome. But formula books such as those by Judy Blume, Norma Klein, and others are somewhat more deceptive in that such writers relate some ordinary and realistic situations. However, I think most of them would make more sense if they were classified in a Dewey number for, let's say, medicine or sociology or criminology. Literature, they are not. They are not literature because they do not extend a reader's experience; indeed they put blinkers on it. They are mimicking life, not enriching it.

Fine books come out of a fine, rich, well-stored mind. They have a breadth beyond the immediate problem, which can be found even in such a lighthearted book as Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967). And try Helen Cresswell's "The Bagthorpe Chronicles" (1977), absolutely zany books, but filled with perceptive glimpses of the many facets of modern life. At the end of *Ox: The Story of a Kid at the Top* (Ney, 1970), the child protagonist says "Nothing ever changes"—what a barren experience of life, and how unreal. Jill Paton Walsh's superb novel, *Fireweed* (1969), ends with the symbol of that sturdy plant which can grow again out of a ruin. Which one's the mockingbird? Which one's the world?

References

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little women*. Boston: Robert Brothers, 1868.

Barrie, J. M. *Peter Pan and Wendy*. London: Scribner's, 1911.

Blake, William. *Songs of innocence*. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

Blume, Judy. *Forever*. Scarsdale, N.Y.: Bradbury Press, 1975.

Boston, L. M. *The children of Green Knowe*. New York: Harcourt, 1955.

Breckenridge, Gerald. *The radio boys on the Mexican border*. New York: A. L. Burt, 1912.

Cresswell, Helen. *Ordinary Jack: Being the first part of the Bagthorpe saga*. New York: Macmillan, 1977.

Crews, Frederick C. *The Pooh perplex*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965.

de Brunhoff, Jean. *Babar and his children.* (Translated by Merle Haas). New York: Random House, 1954.
de la Mare, Walter. *Songs of childhood.* London: Longmans, 1902.
de la Mare, Walter. *Peacock pie.* London: Constable, 1913.
de la Mare, Walter. *Poems for children.* London: Constable, 1930.
Dixon, Franklin W. The Hardy boys series. New York: Grosset & Dunlap/Wanderer Books, 1934-1979.
Emerson, Alice B. (pseud.). *Ruth Fielding in moving pictures.* New York: Cupples, 1916.
Emerson, Alice B. (pseud.). *Ruth Fielding at college.* New York: Cupples, 1917.
Emerson, Alice B. (pseud.). *Ruth Fielding in the Great Northwest.* New York: Cupples, 1921.
Emerson, Alice B. (pseud.). *Ruth Fielding treasure hunting.* New York: Cupples, 1923.
Emerson, Alice B. (pseud.). *Ruth Fielding in the Far North.* New York: Cupples, 1924.
Estes, Eleanor. *The Moffats.* New York: Harcourt, 1941.
Garis, Lilian. *The girl scouts at Sea Crest.* New York: Cupples, 1920.
Grahame, Kenneth. *The wind in the willows.* London: Metheun, 1908.
Hamilton, Virginia. *The planet of Junior Brown.* New York: Macmillan, 1971.
Hayes, Clair W. (Robert L. Drake, pseud.). *The boy allies in the trenches.* New York: A. L. Burt, 1915.
Holland, Isabelle. *Summer of my first love.* New York: Fawcett, 1981.
Hope, Laura Lee. (pseud.). The Bobbsey Twins series. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1904-1980.
Jarrell, Randall. *The bat-poet.* (Illustrated by Maurice Sendak.). New York: Macmillan, 1964.
Keene, Carolyn (pseud.). Nancy Drew series. New York: Grosset & Dunlap/Wanderer Books, 1930-1980.
Konigsburg, Elaine M. *From the mixed-up files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler.* New York: Atheneum, 1967.
Langworthy, J. L. *The aeroplane boys among the clouds.* Chicago: M. A. Donahue, 1912.
Lofting, Hugh. *Dr. Dolittle's return.* New York: F. A. Stokes, 1933.
Milne, A. A. *Winnie-the-Pooh.* London: Dutton, 1926.
Milne, A. A. *The house at Pooh Corner.* London: Dutton, 1928.
Moore, Anne Carroll. *The three owls.* New York: Macmillan, 1925.
Moore, Anne Carroll. *My roads to childhood.* New York: Doubleday, 1939.
Ney, John. *Ox: The story of a kid at the top.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1970.
Norton, Mary. *The borrowers.* New York: Harcourt, 1953.
Orwell, George. *The collected essays, journalism and letters* (Vol. 1). London: Secker & Warburg, 1968.
Paterson, Katherine. *Jacob have I loved.* New York: Crowell, 1980.
Pearce, Philippa. *Tom's midnight garden.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1959.
Penrose, Margaret (pseud.). *The motor girls on a tour.* New York: Cupples & Leon, 1910.
Penrose, Margaret (pseud.). *The radio girls on Station Island.* New York: Cupples & Leon, 1922.
Ransome, Arthur. *Swallows and Amazons.* London; Jonathan Cape, 1930.
Ransome, Arthur. *Swallowdale.* London: Jonathan Cape, 1931.
Ransome, Arthur. *Coot club.* London: Jonathan Cape, 1934.
Ransome, Arthur. *Great northern.* London: Jonathan Cape, 1947.
The School Friend. London: The Amalgamated Press, 1919-1929.
Southall, Ivan. *Josh.* New York: Macmillan, 1972.
Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The eagle of the ninth.* New York: H. Z. Walck, 1954.
Taylor, Sydney. *All-of-a-kind family.* Chicago: Follett, 1951.
Tolkien, J. R. R. *The hobbit.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938.
Townsend, John Rowe. *Written for children.* London: Kestrel Books, 1965.
Walsh, Jill Paton. *Fireweed.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969.
Walsh, Jill Paton. *Goldengrove.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972.
White, E. B. *Charlotte's web.* New York: Harper & Row, 1952.
Wilde, Oscar. The decay of lying. In *Complete works of Oscar Wilde.* London: Collins, 1973.
Wyman, L. P. *The golden boys in the Maine woods.* New York: A. L. Burt, 1922.
Young, Clarence. *The motor boys in strange waters.* New York: Cupples & Leon, 1909.
Zindel, Paul. *The pigman.* New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
Zindel, Paul. *Pardon me, you're stepping on my eyeball.* New York: Harper & Row, 1976.
Zindel, Paul. *The undertaker's gone bananas.* New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

tip

Ethel L. Heins

"Go, and Catch a Falling Star": What *Is* a Good Children's Book?

"Enduring Elements of Good Children's Books" was the assigned title for this paper, but the questions raised by this deceptively simple, yet hopelessly comprehensive, topic seemed overwhelming. After all, haven't critics since Aristotle been struggling with the problem of what constitutes a good book? I decided I could live peacefully only with a point of view less vague and confusing and, at the same time, less absolute. Borrowing an ironical line from John Donne, I chose, instead, as my title, "Go, and Catch a Falling Star: What *Is* a Good Children's Book?"[1] Only in this less courageous way do I dare come to grips with such terms as *enduring elements* and *good children's books*.

It's not that a search for a definition of good children's books or a discussion of literary elements is unworthy of the attempt, but that the idea is almost terrifying in its ambiguity. For if one considers good children's books, one should logically try to find a common denominator for such diverse forms as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, folklore, and picture books—a futile task. And dividing groups into smaller units, how is one to establish a common goodness for, let's say, realistic fiction, historical fiction, and fantasy? True, these genres may exhibit excellences of storytelling, characterization, or style; but the goodness of each form must reside in its own characteristic nature. Nevertheless, to simplify our search for what may well turn out to be an unattainable definition, it would be wise to refer chiefly to the novel for children.

Ethel L. Heins is editor of The Horn Book Magazine.
©1982 by Ethel L. Heins.

A good children's book, like any kind of good book, is not dependent on *enduring* elements but on *appropriate* elements. Focusing on the significance of the appropriate is the wonderfully inventive picture-storybook, *Lion,* by William Pène du Bois (1956). In an animal factory, a workshop high in the sky, an angelic artist thought of a new word, *lion,* and worked hard to create an image and a sound to fit the word. At first, he unfortunately chose "peep peep" as the sound and made preposterous animal figures, blatantly colored and decked out with feathers, fur, and fish scales, but he finally succeeded in capturing the essence of the king of beasts, including his roar. Feathers, fish scales, and a rainbow of colors were ludicrous on a lion, even though they could be appropriate for another sort of creature; and a good book, like a well-made lion, is a unique creation.

One can decide, for one reason or another, why a particular children's book is good. One can discuss the merits of, say, *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1962), *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (Konigsburg, 1967), or *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt, 1975). But it is practically impossible to generalize and talk abstractly about a good children's book as such. Furthermore, attempts to define the very notion of a children's book in the first place have been interesting though ultimately somewhat fruitless. Some authors—and I think they were perfectly honest—have shrugged off the whole concept, maintaining that in their own minds no clear difference exists between a work for children and one intended for adults, and that the dividing

line separating the two is largely an artificial, albeit a pragmatic, one. For a variety of reasons I cannot agree with those authors; but we must admit that occasional books enormously read by children—for instance, T. H. White's *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1980) and Sheila Burnford's *The Incredible Journey* (1961)—were first published in this country as adult books. And reviewers and critics wrestled with the perplexing dilemma presented by Alan Garner's *Red Shift* (1973), surely as unyielding and recondite a book as anything that has ever appeared on a juvenile list; a book not surprisingly reviewed by *The New York Times* as an adult book, yet one about which the percipient English critic Margery Fisher (1972) wrote, "It would be equally insulting to children and to Alan Garner to treat *Red Shift* as anything but a superbly exciting piece of literature."

Moreover, to become even more analytical, what, precisely, *is* a child? and what has happened to the very definition of childhood? What about the social convulsions of the past 20 years, garishly reflected and animated on the television screen, which have masked our children with cynicism and false sophistication? What about the lamented lost innocence of youth and the altered image of the child in contemporary culture?

Now we have reached once again the ultimate word, *good*, and it's time to return to the idea of good children's books. Once again renouncing both the vague and the absolute, I shall probably raise more questions than I shall answer. What does *good* actually mean here? Good for whom? how? when? in what way? First, we must acknowledge the power of fashion, taste, convention, and prejudice.

The Search for Quality

The search for quality in children's books is an adult preoccupation, of course; it began more than 300 years ago. During the Puritan age, books written for children were so drenched in dogma and didacticism, they could scarcely seem childlike to us. But the authors meant these books—Harvey Darton (1932, Ch. 4) called them "good Godly books"—to make children ultimately happy and to give them pleasure, pleasure being that of discovering and obeying the will of God. Of course, the Puritan dream of happiness is rather foreign to us today. But the spirit of this writing infused the majority of English and American children's books for the next 150 years: a stern, rigid, vehement ideal of training up the child the way he should go, without any consideration of his nature, his environment, or his capabilities.

When the passionately religious books gave way to the moral, uplifting tales of the 19th century, the search for good children's books lost none of its momentum. Just as the Puritans judged folk tales frivolous and immoral, the 18th century Age of Reason found them irrational, unhealthy, and positively dangerous. In France the pedagogical Madame de Genlis (governess to the children of the Duke of Orleans) said that even if fairy tales *were* moral—and she didn't think they were—it was "not the moral of the story that the children would remember, but the descriptions of enchanted gardens and diamond palaces—as if diamond palaces really existed in our lives! Such fantastic imaginings could give them only false ideas, retard the progress of their minds, and inspire them with disgust for really instructive reading" (Hazard, 1944, p. 18).

In England the redoubtable Sarah Trimmer founded a magazine called *The Guardian of Education* early in the 19th century. Its main purpose was "to contribute to the preservation of the young and innocent from the dangers which threaten them in the form of infantile and juvenile literature" (Darton, 1932, p. 96)—and doesn't it all sound like the pious pronouncements of our "Moral Majority"? One of her correspondents bristled over *Cinderella*—"perhaps one of the most exceptionable books that was ever written for children. . . . It paints some of the worst passions that can enter into the human breast, and of which little children should, if possible, be totally ignorant; such as envy, jealousy, a dislike to mothers-in-law and half-sisters, vanity, a love of dress, etc., etc." (Darton, 1932, p. 96). I feel a curious empathy with Sarah Trimmer, for she was often roused to editorialize, as I am, although I'm afraid her concerns are not *precisely* mine: "Formerly children's reading, whether for instruction or amusement, was confined to a very small number of volumes; of late years they have multiplied to an astonishing and alarming degree, and much mischief lies hid in many of them. The utmost circumspection is therefore requisite in making a proper selection; and children should not be permitted to make their own choice. . . ." (Haviland, 1973, p. 4). Of John Newbery's edition of *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes*[2] Trimmer said, "This Book is a great favourite with us on account of the simplicity of style in which it is written, yet we wish some parts to be altered, or omitted. . . . However, with all its faults, we wish to see this

Book continue in circulation, as some of these faults *a pair of scissors* can rectify. . ."(Haviland, 1973, p. 6).

Wordsworth with his newborn children trailing clouds of glory probably helped to set the tonality of the literature of childhood of the 19th century. Not only the tonality of children's literature, but also of the changing attitude toward the child; for of course he stood—along with Charles Lamb and Coleridge—in fiery opposition to the moralizing books of the time. Later on, with Dickens, Mark Twain, and George Macdonald, to name only a few writers, the child became a symbol of the Romantic protest against a utilitarian society, and the imagination—at long last!—came out of exile.

I am galloping somewhat roughshod over a great deal of literary and social history; but the 18th-century doctrine of original sin turned into the 19th-century cult of original virtue—or innocence—in the child. And now the search for good children's books took a new direction.

Admittedly, it is a rather long leap from Sarah Trimmer to the pioneering zeal of Caroline M. Hewins, that New England herald of library service to children. She firmly thrust aside the notion that books for children were nothing but instructional tools, and she based her conception of library work on a pure love for books; for her this meant careful selection of the *best*, a selection rooted in an intimate knowledge of children themselves and based on an acquaintance of the so-called best of world literature.

In 1875 Caroline Hewins became the librarian of a private subscription library in Hartford, Connecticut, called the Young Men's Institute; and she promptly began to examine its collection to find what might be suitable for the few children whose families could afford to subscribe. To her satisfaction she discovered the Grimm Brothers, Andersen, Hawthorne, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray; but to her dismay she also found they were read much less frequently than those authors she called "the immortal four: Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, Harry Castlemon, and Martha Finley of *Elsie Dinsmore* fame" (Lindquist, 1954, p. 89). When the older girls began to ask for the novels of Ouida, Miss Hewins took them home, read them, and was *not* favorably impressed. Writing a letter to the local newspaper, she asked mothers and fathers if they knew what their daughters were reading; and she told them of a story "in which are men who have broken every one of the Ten Commandments, and yet are the petted idols of London society" (p. 91). Then she called in the president of the institute and showed him some of the books for older boys, which were full of "profanity and vulgarity. She was given permission to discard these and substituted better books as soon as possible" (p. 91).

It was exactly a century ago that Miss Hewins published the first edition of her famous pamphlet, *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children.* Her guide opened with a rather spirited preface, followed by rules for parents on how to teach the right use of books. Here are a few:

> Do not let them [the children] read anything you have not read yourself.
>
> Read to them, and teach them to look for the explanation of allusions in books. Do not count time lost in going to the library with them to see a portrait of Queen Elizabeth, or a picture of a Roman chariot, or to find out why mincepies are eaten at Thanksgiving.
>
> Do not let them depend on school "speakers" and the "Hundred choice selections" for poetry which they must learn. Find it for them in Shakespeare or Scott, or whatever poet you love, and arrange a scene from the "Midsummer night's dream," the "Tempest," or "As you like it," and let them act it at Christmas or on a birthday.
>
> Remember Jacob Abbott's sensible rule, to give children something that they are growing up to, not away from, and keep down their stock of children's books to the very best" (Lindquist, 1954, p. 92).

The third edition of the Hewins book list, published in 1915 by the American Library Association, contains a fuller preface and even more definitive ideas. Still urging parents to obtain for their children the best books money could buy, she told them "best books" were those which enlarge the child's world and enrich his life: poetry; prints from great artists; an edition of Shakespeare to be handled "as freely as the Mother Goose which a child should know by heart at six" (Hewins, 1915, p. 11); fairy tales and myths; absurd fun like Carroll and Lear; and books about nature and the out-of-doors.

> A few stories of modern life that have become general favorites, even though they have faults of style like "Little Women," or a sensational plot like "Little Lord Fauntleroy," are on the list, for the sake of the happy, useful home-life of the one and the sunshiny friendliness of

> the other. Most of the tales of home and school are those in which children lead simple, sheltered lives. Stories of the present day in which children die, are cruelly treated, or offer advice to their fathers and mothers, and take charge of the finances and love affairs of their elders, are not good reading for boys and girls in happy homes, and the favorite books of less fortunate children are fairy-tales or histories rather than stories of life like their own.
>
> (Hewins, 1915, p. 5)

I find this last statement fascinating—even though a mite patronizing—because right now, after nearly 70 years, all the right-minded, nondidactic writers I know—like Nina Bawden, Isabelle Holland, Penelope Lively, and Katherine Paterson—agree with Miss Hewins that to offer children only books that reflect their own background and circumstances is preposterous and regressive, and nothing but a throwback to our puritanical forebears.

Speaking of *Little Women*, as Caroline Hewins just did, it interested me to note that Edith Wharton in her autobiography, *A Backward Glance* (1934), says, "I was never allowed to read the popular American children's books of my day because, as my mother said, the children spoke bad English *without the author's knowing it*. . . . I remember it was only with reluctance, and because 'all the other children read them,' that my mother consented to my reading 'Little Women' and 'Little Men'; and my ears, trained to the fresh racy English of 'Alice in Wonderland,' 'The Water Babies' and 'The Princess and the Goblin,' were exasperated by the laxities of the great Louisa (p. 51). (It should be recalled that when Edith Wharton was a child, *Little Women* was still a new book and a best seller.)

But the quest for good children's books went on. Caroline Hewins was a close friend of Anne Carroll Moore, who in New York was building a powerful career on a relentless search for and a celebration of good children's literature. But was the very term *good children's literature* only a vague generality depending for its meaning on the cultivation, the taste, and the purpose of its user?

In the 1920s the idea of good books for children spread like a rising tide: there were the high-minded new editors of publishers' juvenile departments; the establishment of the Newbery Medal; and in 1924—part and parcel of the same impulse—the founding of *The Horn Book Magazine*, whose first editorial announced the aim of the fledgling journal, "to blow the horn for fine books for boys and girls." It was in the 1930s that the eminent French scholar-historian Paul Hazard wrote his unique little treatise, which was eventually translated as *Books, Children and Men* (1944). Perhaps the most often-quoted bit of the book is his four-page credo entitled "What Are Good Books?"

After the war, Lillian Smith of Toronto wrote her enormously influential *The Unreluctant Years* (1953), in which she raised, and convincingly answered, some time-honored critical questions, thus injecting status into the field of children's literature by proving that the creative energy going into it is no different from that going into other kinds of writing. This, of course, was the period when Walter de la Mare was the patron saint of children's books, and his spirit hovered over most of the writing about them. Indeed, from his introduction to *Bells and Grass* (1942), a single sentence was embla zoned in the hearts of children's book people: "I know well that only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for the young." But how many of us are aware of the interesting words that follow? "I *know* too that in later life it is just (if only just) possible now and again to recover fleetingly the intense delight, the untellable joy and happiness and fear and grief and pain of our early years, of an all but forgotten childhood" (p. 9). I contend that here he is very close to the mind and soul of Maurice Sendak.

Of course, there have been myriads of book lists—like the thick volumes of compilations of recommended books from the *Bulletin* of the Center for Children's Books of the University of Chicago—volumes called *Good Books for Children*, whose introductions used terms like *noteworthy* and *best* books and reaffirmed the now traditional criteria of literary quality, quality of content, and suitability of style and subject matter for the intended age. Zena Sutherland in her introduction to the *Bulletin's* latest volume, now entitled *The Best in Children's Books, 1973-1978* (1980), said, "It is incumbent on adults who are concerned with children's reading to select and counsel wisely" and, among other things, "to comprehend what the elements of good children's books are. In many ways, the literary criteria that apply to adult books and children's books are the same," and she enumerated, "that most elusive component, a distinctive literary style" (p. viii) as well as a well-constructed plot, sound characterization without stereotypes, appropriate dialogue, and a pervasive theme.

Now, you who are criticizing the critics are undoubtedly thinking we are given to somewhat

lofty generalizations; but if we *have* been a bit vague about what actually constitutes a good book, we have been quite definite about the bad ones, pretty sure of ourselves in identifying the tawdry and the trivial. At least we were until 15 or 20 years ago.

The past 100 years of inteilectual, scientific, and technological expansion have brought not merely undreamed-of blessings but excruciating problems and unbearable burdens as well. But children's books did not keep pace with the breathtaking changes in the world and, for a long time, did not reflect these problems and burdens. By the 1950s, sex and violence were still unthinkable in explicit terms, and although the dark side of life was not ignored, didacticism was abhorred, and the emphasis remained on traditional good taste and literary quality. Of course, children's writers were not yet concerning themselves with the exceptional child, the abused or the retarded child, or the deeply troubled child. Nor was the imbalance of society's views of certain ethnic and racial groups a major theme, as yet. Thus, although a good deal of naturalism had been injected into adult fiction almost a century before, children's books were still comparatively unaffected.

Then we were plunged into the 1960s, and, as Ann Durell (1982) of E. P. Dutton said in her recent *Horn Book* article, "Indian summer was over . . . the winds of change were about to rise to gale force . . . the social upheavals were already being ushered in to the sonic boom of an amplified electric guitar" (p. 27). The adolescent, or teenager, said to be an American invention, just as the child had been a Victorian one, came to a new independence, and younger brothers and sisters soon began to demand equal freedom. Supported by Freudian theories, authors brought barriers crashing down. And the problem novel arrived, with topics that sounded (and this is Sheila Egoff in her Arbuthnot Honor Lecture) "like chapter titles from a textbook on social pathology." Moreover, the so-called issues approach to children's literature cast away traditional literary and aesthetic standards, and grimly determined adults linked the new view to the practice of bibliotherapy, the use of books to solve their personal problems. Social and educational reformers, with their nonliterary assaults on children's books, might lead one to assume that the ancient tales of poets and storytellers as well as the whole body of creative writing for children were to blame for the injustice and inequality that plague us, and not society itself. Yet over the heads of children the strident voices of adults continue to rage, particularly in the mass media. And latter-day Sarah Trimmers are romping through children's books, scissors in hand.

The Problem with "Enduring Elements"

But let us turn away from the great quest for the good, for I am still haunted by the notion of enduring elements of good books. If we consider elements as simply the component parts of a book, the questions that then obtrude are: Why should the elements of one good book correspond to the elements of another good book? Why should the elements which make one book effective and unique serve the same purpose for another unique book, which is, at its best, one of a kind? In a literary work elements are neither good nor bad in themselves, but merely descriptive. They only serve to indicate the boundaries, and ultimately the form, of the work in question. Certainly in Katherine Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved* (1980) there is a biblical element of quotation and allusion. Critically, one can go beyond the mere identification of this element to indicate how the structure of the book, the very conduct of the story, develops from the context of specific quotations and allusions, and their relationship to the story may be the very key to its meaning.

We are convinced of the goodness or greatness of any book only when we perceive the peculiarly successful combination and interrelationship of its elements, even as a glance at such disparate examples as Jane Gardam's *A Long Way from Verona* (1972) or *The Slave Dancer* (Fox, 1973) or *Tom's Midnight Garden* (Pearce, 1958) or *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* (Steig, 1969) will suggest. Even when two distinct works offer analogies—such as *Hamlet* and the Orestes story or the tale of Brunhilde surrounded by flames and that of the Sleeping Beauty encircled by thorns—the quality of each composition remains individual. One tunes in to a performance: the simultaneous existence of separate elements creating a unity, even as harmony, counterpoint, and instrumentation can coexist in a given measure of music by Bach.

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* Wayne Booth (1961) states approvingly that Henry James in his essay, "The Art of Fiction," explicitly repudiated any effort to say " 'definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be.' For him the only absolute requirement is that 'it be interesting.' He will praise a novel like *Treasure Island* because it succeeds 'wonderfully in what it attempts' " (p.24). Two months after the publication of James's famous essay, Stevenson published one on the same sub-

ject—"A Humble Remonstrance"—in which he stated the following cogent qualifications: "With each new subject . . . the true artist will vary his method and change the point of attack. That which was in one case an excellence, will become a defect in another; what was the making of one book, will in the next be impertinent or dull." (Smith, 1948, p. 93). So much for enduring elements!

Let me illustrate Stevenson's perception by referring to a work by a children's novelist who has recently used a former excellence (Stevenson's word) quite unsuccessfully. I refer to two novels of Penelope Lively, both of which employ situations in which historical time intrudes into the present; her Carnegie-Medal book, *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* (1973), and *The Revenge of Samuel Stokes* (1981), which is reminiscent of the other one in theme, plot, and character. The events seem frustrating to both the characters and the reader; and while in the first book the element of the supernatural intimately penetrates into the life of the young protagonist, in the second one the effect is dissipated and trivialized so that it unintentionally becomes a parody of its predecessor.

It is by now fairly obvious, I'm afraid, that the more one talks about good children's books, the more one must push back the frontiers of the subject. At the risk of being repetitious, I must stress again the inherent ambiguity in the term *good children's books*. For instance, if one adopts Louise Rosenblatt's concept of a tripartite relationship linking author, book, and reader, the good of the book is not necessarily the same for the author and the reader—one being concerned with creation and the other with response; while the book studied objectively as a literary work may be considered in terms of its construction or of its organic nature. Is it enough to say that a children's book is good in its own right, as a work of literature? or should it be called good because of its lasting influence or because of what it can do to or for the reader?

If the goodness of a children's book should depend upon both its literary merit and its ultimate significance for children, there still remain a number of troublesome conclusions to be faced. One can immediately eliminate the book which seems to be an impeccable literary production but fails to reach an audience. It reminds me of Polonius saying to Hamlet, "What do you read, my lord?" And Hamlet says, "Words, words, words." What about the book of outstanding merit that is accessible only to a few? Do you know that vast, panoramic novel, Fritz Mühlenweg's *Big Tiger and Christian* (1952)? One of our children swallowed it in great joyous gulps when he was 10, scarcely eight years after he went through elaborate nightly rituals with *Goodnight Moon* (Brown, 1947), a mysterious subtle book to which he, like so many other babies, was compulsively attached.

What about the positive quality of an inferior book that appeals to many? Not really a futile question when asked in the light of these statements by Louise Rosenblatt in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1978). "Absorption in the quality and structure of the experience engendered by the text can happen whether the reader is enthralled by the adventures of the Hardy Boys or by the anguish of *King Lear*. In either case, in my view, the text has given rise to a literary work of art" (p. 27). Lest we be unduly impressed by the term *literary work of art*, it must be noted that these statements concerned with the reading experience are capped by the author's astute conclusion: "How to decide whether it is good, bad, or indifferent art is another question. . . ." (p.27).

If we are concerned with the child's responsive act in reading the book—his own contribution to the creative process, if you will—shouldn't we, as adults, play a part in making it comprehensible? Since more than three-fourths of my working life was spent introducing books to children, I am naturally convinced of the frequent necessity for an intermediary—what Dorothy Butler calls the human link between the child and the book. Rosenblatt makes the following analogy: "The reader of a text who evokes a literary work of art is, above all, a performer, in the same sense that a pianist performs a sonata, reading it from the text before him" (p. 28). Since I belong to a musical family, the analogy is especially appealing to me; in fact, I would extend it to a double analogy and say that the pianist is not only a performer, she is an intermediary as well. For a listener may need a pianist in order to apprehend the music, just as a child often needs an intermediary to become aware of the existence of a book as well as of its imaginative and emotional force.

As judges, or critics, adults are of course fallible. Perhaps the most egregious slip occurred when the Newbery Medal was bestowed on the worthiness of *Secret of the Andes* (Clark, 1952) instead of on the perfection of *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952), thus endowing the award book with a kind of negative fame. One of my predecessors, Ruth Hill Viguers (1965) unfortunately put herself on

record with an opinion of *Harriet the Spy:* "Many adult readers appreciating the sophistication of the book will find it funny and penetrating. Children, however, do not enjoy cynicism. I doubt its appeal to many of them" (p. 75). I must add that it has been many years since *Horn Book* reviews flirted with prophecy in this way.

I know that I have not only despaired of my subject but have actually failed to state in ringing terms what makes a children's book *good.* It would be comforting to be able to do so, but comfort cannot take the place of precision and exactitude; and if the subject does not submit to being encapsulated in a formula or a theorem, its very elusiveness may prove to be its glory. On the other hand, if this discussion has succeeded in arousing logical and pragmatic objections, I am sure that it answers its purpose—to elicit varying points of view that will help to modulate your beliefs and opinions—and also mine. To tighten my closing thought, may I remind you of three lines from T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" (1968).

> What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning.
> The end is where we start from.

Notes

1. John Donne. "Song," st.1.
2. *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes.* Attributed to Oliver Goldsmith. Published by John Newbery in 1766.

References

Babbitt, Natalie. *Tuck everlasting.* New York: Farrar, 1975.

Booth, Wayne. *The rhetoric of fiction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Brown, Margaret Wise. *Goodnight moon.* New York: Harper, 1947.

Burnett, Frances H. *The secret garden.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962.

Burnford, Sheila. *The incredible journey.* Atlantic/Little, 1961.

Clark, Ann Nolan. *Secret of the Andes.* New York: Viking, 1952.

Darton, Harvey. *Children's books in England: Five centuries of social life.* Cambridge University Press, 1932.

de la Mare, Walter. *Bells and grass.* New York: Viking, 1942.

du Bois, William Pène. *Lion.* New York: Viking, 1956.

Durell, Ann. If there is no happy ending: Children's book publishing—past, present, and future. *The Horn Book Magazine,* February 1982, *58.*

Eliot, T. S. Little Gidding. In *Four quartets.* New York: Harcourt, 1968.

Fisher, Margery. *Times Literary Supplement,* 1972.

Fox, Paula. *The slave dancer.* Scarsdale, N.Y.: Bradbury, 1973.

Gardam, Jane. *A long way from Verona.* New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Garner, Alan. *Red shift.* New York: Macmillan, 1973.

Haviland, Virginia. *Children and literature: Views and reviews.* Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1973.

Hazard, Paul. *Books, children and men.* Boston: Horn Book, 1944.

Hewins, Caroline M. *Books for boys and girls: A selected list.* Chicago: American Library Association, 1915.

Konigsburg, E. L. *From the mixed-up files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler.* New York: Atheneum, 1967.

Lindquist, Jennie D. Caroline Hewins and books for children. In *Caroline M. Hewins: Her book.* Boston: Horn Book, 1954.

Lively, Penelope. *The ghost of Thomas Kempe.* New York: Dutton, 1973.

Lively, Penelope. *The revenge of Samuel Stokes.* New York: Dutton, 1981.

Mühlenweg, Fritz. *Big tiger and Christian.* New York: Pantheon. 1952.

Paterson, Katherine. *Jacob have I loved.* New York: Crowell, 1980.

Pearce, Phillipa. *Tom's midnight garden.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1958.

Rosenblatt, Louise. *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Smith, Janet Adam (Ed.). *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A record of friendship and criticism.* Hart-Davis, 1948.

Smith, Lillian. *The unreluctant years.* Chicago: American Library Association, 1953.

Steig, William. *Sylvester and the magic pebble.* New York: Windmill, 1969.

Sutherland, Zena. *The best in children's books, 1973-1978.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Viguers, Ruth Hill. On spies and applesauce and such. *The Horn Book Magazine.* February 1965, *41.*

Wharton, Edith. *A backward glance.* New York: Appleton-Century, 1934.

White, E. B. *Charlotte's web.* New York: Harper, 1952.

White, T. H. *Mistress Masham's repose.* New York: Gregg, 1980.

tip

Jean Karl

An Editor's View: Recognizing the Best

The editor is the first chooser of children's books or any books; the first one outside an author's circle of family and friends who makes a value judgment about what may or may not be a masterpiece. Any manuscript by any author that is not chosen for publication by some editor (unless the author chooses to publish the work at his own expense) is not going to be available for critics, teachers, librarians, or readers of any age to love, hate, or even pass by.

Children's manuscripts come to editors in many forms. Some are neatly typed in the preferred double spacing, on one side of the sheet with all of the pages duly numbered. Some come written in longhand on notebook paper. Some come with pictures that are better than the text. Some come with no pictures and do not need them. Some are lush with adjectives, intense descriptions, and dramatic attempts at conveying suspense and emotions. Others are so spare as to make one wonder if the author were paying for the words. Short ones may be no more than a paragraph. Long ones may achieve a thousand typewritten pages or more. Almost none of them are masterpieces. Almost none of them are even good. Yet there are always a number that could be good with the right kind of revision. And a very few may be great just as they are.

They come in at prodigious rates. At Atheneum we get 2500 to 3000 a year. Other publishers get even more. The authors these manuscripts represent are teachers, librarians, professional writers, children, grandparents, residents of prisons and other institutions, rich, poor. Some are aware of what a children's book really is, while others are only aware that such things do exist. For some, children's books are simply a place to begin writing because books for children must surely be the easiest kind to do.

Jean Karl is editor of children's books at Atheneum Publishers.

It is a daunting exercise, to confront them as they arrive. Although all are read, not all can be read with pleasure. Yet every one of them, no matter how bad or good, says something about our culture, our attitudes toward children, and the deep needs of people of all kinds to express themselves, to put something down on paper that represents them. So none can be summarily dismissed, though in the end a judgment must be made about each.

What makes the difference between the good and the bad? That judgment is not always as easy to make as one might think. For the editor, there is no jacket blurb, no cryptic summary on a copyright page, no general air created by jacket, binding, type, and paper to give a feel of what the pages may hold. Typing is no indication of content. Some of the best authors are terrible typists and worse spellers. With each manuscript an editor is, in a sense, on her own outward bound adventure—out there alone to make her way through and come out on the other side with a decision.

Sometimes, of course, the manuscript is so bad or so good that there can be no doubting the

outcome. But for many, the uncertainties outweigh the certainties.

The Weeding Process

Imagine yourself as an editor. You are having a reading day. Editors do not read even solicited manuscripts every day. Some days they edit, some days they go to meetings, or do paper work, or get ready for a sales conference, or deal with illustrators, or do any of a hundred other things. But some days, they sit down with a pile of manuscripts and read. Imagine you are doing just that. And perhaps you are not even reading the common run of what comes in, but a group chosen by a first reader for your "second reading."

The first manuscript you encounter is 200 pages long. It is a story of a young girl who decides she would like to go by balloon around the world. Fortunately, her parents have loads of money and they are highly indulgent. Soon the balloon has been purchased, a pilot secured, and the girl is off. What follows is a travelogue of the world, seen through the eyes of a spoiled and not very perceptive 13-year-old. For all of its uniqueness, the book is dull and self-indulgent, full of dry descriptions of exotic places, and the girl is an utter washout. Here is one that can be quickly discarded. It has no story to speak of, no plot. It is simply a catalog of incidents, loosely tied together by an improbable journey. The characters have no personality; and aside from the initial aberration that commences the journey, our heroine does little to create or control what happens next. The book as a whole seems more designed to display the author's superficial knowledge of distant places than to give us any true insights into the lives of others.

The second book is a picture book manuscript. Its author has told a realistic story of two 5-year-olds going off to kindergarten together as good friends, having a terrible fight during the course of the day, and then returning home at night as the same good friends they were in the morning. It is gently done, yet has wit and charm in the telling. However, the kindergarten atmosphere in the book seems stilted and old fashioned. The teacher is a grandmotherly type who does not quite seem to fit the modern tone of the story's language and children. What do you do? Do you reject it for the teacher who seems to be the wrong person?—not if you need that kind of story. Do you like this approach—gentle but lively and childlike, fun and yet subtly enlarging the child's understanding of himself and his world? If the answer is yes, you may well write to that author, explain the problems you see, and hope the author agrees and knows how to revise, how to replace one character with another. This book may just turn up in your catalog next year, if things go well.

The third manuscript is a problem novel for the middle-aged child. It features divorce, sibling rivalry, school problems, and maybe even a trip to the hospital with a broken arm. Its hero, Tim, is a likable boy. He meets trouble well, not liking it, but not destroyed by it, either. In the end, as a result of his school problems, his broken arm, and his fights with his younger brother, he is sent to live with an aunt and uncle and three cousins, while his parents adjust to their impending divorce and try to set up their lives on a new basis. At first plucky Tim is downcast. But not for long. The three bouncing boy cousins are just what he needs to see himself for what he is: an exuberant, lively boy who needed, not a household full of misery and problems, but an easy-going, understanding atmosphere where he can be himself. There is an idea here, and the author writes well. This author might get a letter suggesting that not all the problems of modern society need to be encompassed in one book. A few are generally enough to make a plot, especially for this age level.

Next comes a book of mediocre verse. This will go back. Even good verse has a hard time finding an audience. The mediocre almost never makes it, unless it is on a theme that has special appeal.

This manuscript is followed by a nonfiction book of 300 pages on varieties of grass. Grass can be an interesting subject, but few children want 300 pages of it. If the book is well-written, however, and the author could be persuaded to tell only a part of what he knows — the part that will be of most value and interest to children — and if you really want to publish a book on grass, you might have something here.

And so it goes. Manuscript follows manuscript. Some are clearly not something you will want to publish. Others would seem to have something to offer, if you wanted to take the time to work with the author, or if the manuscript was something you were looking for.

But what are you looking for? The "best," you may say; but best for whom? For the publisher, because it is something that will obviously sell? For the critic, because the style and subject matter are current critical favorites? For the teacher, because

it teaches something the teacher believes every child should know? For the librarian, because it seems to fulfill the criteria she learned for book selection at library school 25 years ago and also seems to be something her patrons enjoy? For the editor, because it is an easy decision— it is by an author who has been published successfully before, or by someone who has used a popular theme and handled it well—and no one will question the choice? Is it one of these things that make a book best? Best because an adult says so? Or is a best book best because a child reader will read the book with enjoyment. Can a book be best for all of these people, child included? Or is it likely to be best for only a few of them, if indeed it really turns out to be best for any of them. Who decides that it is best for anyone? The editor may be the first chooser, but is his decision always based on best for everyone?

The truth is that there are many kinds of best. The sales motto, "If it sells it's good," is probably not a motto most editors of children's books, or critics, or even children, could accept. But it cannot be ignored. A book that is not read is no book at all. A good book must be one that some child — though not all children — really wants to read, I think, and yet it must be more, too. But how much more?

A best book will also recommend itself to some critics, some teachers, and some librarians, though not necessarily all. No book is going to be seen in the same light by all readers. Which takes us to just what a good book — a great book even — must be.

It is impossible, of course, to spell out all that makes a great book. But there are some ideas that can be considered. There are reasons why a best book, and sometimes a great book, is not as easily recognized as one might hope, by editors or by anyone else.

Elements of "Best" Books

Let's begin at the beginning — the very beginning, which is the ability to put thoughts and sequences of action down on paper in such a way that someone else will understand them. Not necessarily everyone else. But in the case of children's books, certainly the surface elements of the work should convey themselves to readers with some degree of ease. That's obvious? Not to everyone. Nor does everyone welcome this information. Most editors are asked by a publication called *Writer's Market* to list their requirements for manuscripts submitted. I have no record of exactly what I put on the form a year or two ago, but evidently I said that before people submitted manuscripts they should learn how to write. It may have been a bit harsh; but I may have been reading some of the more unreadable manuscripts that day. Recently I received a letter from an unpublished author that said, in part: "I have written the most delightful children's story imaginable, and an artist friend has done illustrations beyond my dearest imaginings. Then, since I have admired several Atheneum children's books in the past, I decided to look up your address in *Writer's Market*. You can imagine my distress when I read your terse, rude little quip about the inferiority of the works you are *forced* (I suppose by circumstances) to consider, and your bitter "learn how to write" statement. As one who *has* learned how to write and is, in fact, one of the best writers working today, let me suggest that you learn how to deal with people." He goes on to say that he has no intention of submitting his gem to me. The writer has obviously never seen the kind of books publishers receive.

In spite of his objections, I still maintain that people must learn how to write before they can write a good book. They must learn the fundamentals of grammar. They must learn how to organize thoughts. They must learn how to construct sentences and paragraphs so that they hang together and make sense. Beyond this, they must learn the subtle values of words, the subliminal effects they have on readers, both as pure sound and as entities that collect around them auras of meaning with impacts beyond mere dictionary definitions. People need to learn about rhythms and patterns that underlie sentences and paragraphs. All of these things help at the same time to both define and expand the material with which the author is dealing. Without such a grasp of language, which, when it has been learned, works almost automatically for the writer, a best book is not possible. I do not regret having suggested to prospective writers that it is necessary.

But this is only the beginning tool of the writer. What lies beyond the basic writing skills depends upon the kind of work the author is attempting. For the writer of nonfiction, it is important to have a clarity of purpose, a grasp of the material to be presented, and an approach that is at the same time interesting and informative, and no more difficult than necessary.

For the writer of fiction, even more is needed. In fact, here the requirements begin with something as basic as the inner nature of the person doing the writing. Fiction — from picture book to adult novel — must carry with it some essence of the inner person telling the story. A work of fiction need not be autobiographical. Yet the work must rise out of the deep understandings and needs of the person who is the author. In a fine work of fiction we are literally seeing a segment of the world — as it is, as it was, as it could be, or as the author wishes it were — through the author's eyes. This does not mean the writer is necessarily doing this consciously. Rather, the author is writing about something that so involves him that his deep understandings and perceptions are revealed in what he writes. Consequently his inner self, his creative vision, is the essence of the book, and the key to the quality of what he writes. He blends his fine style with a true vision and a story that carries the reader along with the vision.

The author of that best novel, then, formulates his story, develops his characters, determines his background, and writes with a well developed understanding of the use of language — all through the lens of his own deep, and sometimes not wholly perceived, view of life and the world around him. Some of this ability is perhaps inherited and some developed. In the best, it falls together and produces a fine book.

The subject of a fine novel may be almost anything. Once again, the author is the key to this — his interests, his concerns, his creative impulse. What matters is what happens to a reader when the book is read. Does it come alive? Do its characters become people the reader will remember as persons he has known? Is the experience the book provides one that can become a part of the reader's own fund of experience? In short, whether the book is humor, fantasy, ghetto realism, or a simple school or family story, will readers recognize that in this book they will have had a true encounter with life?

Complications

Does this sound easy to recognize? Do you think such a book will automatically reveal itself to an editor? Does an inner drum roll sound, a trumpet play, as the book is picked up from the stack? The truth is, only a few of the best will proclaim themselves in this fashion, for many reasons.

A creative author may find it necessary, in order to achieve the end she desires, to explore new techniques and move in structural and linguistic directions that have not been taken before. Not all authors will find this necessary, but some do. It is that book that may sometimes be most elusive in the search for the best.

David Daiches in his book, a *Study of Literature* (1948), says, "Perhaps it might be said that the greatest novelists of all are those who are so obsessed and fascinated by the aspect of life with which they are dealing that they will sometimes go outside the form of their work to make sure the reader feels the full impact of everything the author wishes to say. . . . A writer may fail to be a perfect artist through excess of greatness, as it were."

We have all been trained to analyze structure, language, plot, characters, background, and the impact of both the whole and the parts of a work. But these are rigid formulas, and no good book is rigid. When a book doesn't quite fit a pattern we have accepted, we sometimes question its validity. Sometimes, because the author decided that to make a work artistically perfect would be to violate the reason for which it was being created, the book consequently seems flawed, and readers miss seeing the greatness of what has been done.

Imagine, for example, that an author wishes to explore the impact of the atomic bomb on a child in Hiroshima. Normally the dramatic climax of a book comes near the end. The book builds up to the climax. But in this book there is a brief chapter in which the child is shown in the everyday world he has known. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, comes the bomb, a violent and dramatic episode that nothing else in the book will approximate in emotional content and dramatic impact. What follows is what happens to that child — torn from his family, injured but not killed. The dramatic and emotional tone of the book, instead of building to a dramatic close, as books normally do, will gradually wind down, until the equilibrium of the first chapter is almost equaled at the end, but the circumstances of that equilibrium are quite different. This is a structure that is not normal. But for this book it may work.

The above, of course, is a superficial example of what is being discussed. The kinds of things an author may do to achieve an end that is worthwhile but that does not fit normal criteria are many, varied, and exist on several levels of critical concern. The reader who finds an author's approach — in structure, in style, in plot, in language — uncomfortable may not be aware of the author's reasons for failing to create what the reader expects

or believes she has a right to expect. This may be the reader's fault. Some readers bring *a priori* judgments to everything they read, perhaps without even knowing it. Or the failure may be the author's. Authors need to make their work as approachable as possible, no matter how different it is. They need to be as complete as possible in order that their world may be recreated in the mind of the reader. Especially when an author is violating accepted patterns, the reader needs subtle guidance as to why. An author cannot do just anything and expect readers to follow. Yet the great author must give his natural reader — the one who will freely read and enjoy the book — room enough to recreate the book in her own mind, using her own ideas and experiences, while at the same time entering into the author's vision. The author gives as much guidance and suggestion as seems needed, but also allows room for individual differences where possible.

The fact that each reader, whether adult or child, brings a different bias and background to books, further complicates an editor's judgment, both because many kinds of readers must be accommodated and because editors, too, are subject to individual tastes. All of what we have known in the past, even all of what we have read before, colors our judgment when it comes to any individual book. Some editors and other readers always like certain kinds of books, unequivocally. They can be blind devotees of some areas of sentimentality (sad dog books, for example) or to pretentiousness that seems to give depth and breadth to a work, when with careful thought and analysis they turn out not to be there. In other words, some authors learn to manipulate words so well that even careful readers don't realize that a graceful, or dramatic, or otherwise impressive flow of words contains only a drip of meaning. Other readers are impressed by books that take the plot and the characters to the edges of current acceptability. They admire the author's daring and do not examine style or plot or even the capacity of the child for whom it is intended to understand what is said. The line between a genuine attempt to explore the frontiers of a child's experience in some areas of human activity and mere sensationalism can sometimes be hard to draw.

Other editors and readers enjoy anything that comes in the guise of fantasy, and have trouble separating the good from the bad there. Others like historical novels or wild adventure novels to an inordinate degree. On the other hand, there are editors and readers who have avid dislikes. Some cannot read humor and enjoy it. Some adults cannot abide the average school novel. For some editors and readers a certain style of writing is always needed in a certain kind of book. And all adults today may have real trouble grasping the differences between the child of today and the child they once were. Authors write for the child they find within themselves. Editors rely on the memory of the child they once were, and the child that survives in them for analyzing books. So do most other adults who are given a responsibility for choosing books for children in one way or another. Even those who know and work with children all the time must sometimes rely on their own instincts which come from their own sense of themselves as children. For all children are different and the judgment of one child will not necessarily be the judgment of another. Many children find it difficult to analyze and present their views on books, even those they like. So the well read, informed adult, using the child within, must make judgments for all children, and this is sometimes difficult.

We need not go very far back in the history of children's literature to illustrate the fact that social changes, changes in the climate of living, may quickly create changes in literary ventures for children. In an essay written in 1955, Louise Seaman Bechtel (1969) states:

"The point is that, besides what is easy and charming, gay and funny, cozy and familiar, children need to be led into what is stranger, more noble, more heroic, more brain-stretching, whether it is a creative work of long ago or of today. Among the greater books there is plenty to match their dreams of conquering space, to illumine their sense of courage and their respect for hard work, and to warm their hearts with understanding of human beings." Most of us would agree with this, but a little farther on she says, "Changing methods of education have shifted the backgrounds of history and literature which used to be offered to children under 14. . . . The concept of the hero, too, has changed, and though it always will be changing, children themselves are keen to grasp fundamental values, and know well the difference between the real hero and the comic-book hero. It is significant that in a recent voting contest in schools, the Gettysburg Address stands high as a favorite piece of literature along with Huck and Tom."

That was written but 27 years ago. Yet how many of us today believe that in a voting contest even Huck and Tom would appear as favorites, let

alone the Gettysburg Address? We and our children have become used to the anti-hero; and we dream of staying alive, not conquering far horizons. The swiftness of social change and outlook compounds yearly until tomorrow already seems to be yesterday to the editor who may begin to work with an author on a book two or three years before it will be published. Books need not keep up with the current fads in literature to be fine books. In fact they are probably better when they do not. But they must seem to belong to the time in which they come new to the reader.

Yet, those who write books for children, and more especially those who edit books for children, as well as those who buy or review them, grew up in an earlier time. Those books of the past were our new books. They helped to create the inner yardsticks we use in judging books. Are these yardsticks not valid at all for today's children? They are when they guide us to the essentials of life, but not necessarily when it comes to the patterns of plot through which those truths of life find expression.

How do we choose books for children who not only have grown up with atom bombs and television — these are almost historic artifacts today — but with computers, electronic games, pocket calculators, Home Box Office, and the beginnings of home robots. We are not dealing with brighter children, I think; not even with children, as people sometimes think, who know more than children used to know. Just children who know different things from the things children used to know; children who are growing up in a more violent world, a more materialistic world, and a less emotionally and physically secure world than children of the last few generations knew. Their needs are emotional, spiritual, intellectual, just as children's needs have always been. These simply need to come to them in the dress of today or even tomorrow. They must be diverse enough to feed their desire for humor, for fun, for delight, as well as their needs to explore the human psyche.

Therefore, not only must a "best book" of fiction be a product of an author with deep insight, fine writing style, creative vision, story-telling ability, and the courage to venture in structure and content where vision demands, but it must also blend the real today with a bit of a possible tomorrow. The work must reflect today as children see it, and be told in a fashion that says "today" to them. Children may read yesterday's books with interest and enthusiasm sometimes, but they do not want the air of yesterday in today's books, even in today's historical novels. Those who write today must see today through the eyes of today's children. Which means, when necessary, using the child within to look not at the past and its yardsticks, but at today and its pressures.

Choosing

How does the editor, the first chooser, put all of this together? In evaluating a work the editor must consider everything from "if it sells it's good," through the almost unknowable forces in the mind of an author that create a work and give it depth and life, and on to the culture of our time as children see it. Considering all that must be considered, it is no wonder that sometimes with the best of intentions less than the best is published, or a good novel or picture book is passed by. Further, there are even considerations that have little to do with best that must be taken into account.

For example, the editor must keep in mind the scope of the list he is planning. How many books will the business department think is a reasonable number? Too many and the firm cannot afford to produce them. Too few and the potential income from the books chosen will be too low to justify the existence of the department.

Next the editor looks at the authors that the house has published before. What are they working on? How soon are those books likely to come in? Are the books to come likely to be good? Is any one author expendable if the book is not up to standard? For how many books yet to be delivered by known authors does the editor already have contracts drawn? What leeway does that leave for new books?

Of the new books, which ones will be selected? If an editor has commitments to 14 dog stories, the likelihood is that any new dog story might be one too many. Although no one decides in advance what a list is to consist of, some balance must be achieved. The balance may be determined by the editor's tastes and inclination, by indications of what the house sells best, and by what manuscripts arrive and are judged publishable, but some variety is important. If publishers are to survive, each new book must sell to someone. Thus, in reading the manuscripts that come in, the need to make the list reach into many corners of interests and acceptance is one factor in deciding what will be published.

Another factor is the cost of a project. A 96-page quality picture book with full color pictures on every page, for example, would, even under the best of circumstances, be a 30-dollar book. And not many people want a 30-dollar children's book. Such a book would have to be not only the best but an undying masterpiece. Not many of them come along.

The editor's own tastes also enter into most final decisions. To work on a book, you have to have some liking for and understanding of what the author is attempting to do. Editors who don't like funny books will not deal well with them. Editors who hate mysteries will not be a good judge of mysteries. Yet the best of editors have wide interests, so small foibles don't show too much in the general composition of what they do. A good editor also knows what kinds of books she likes too much and what kind she likes too little and tries to make allowances.

Finally, there is the spirit of the manuscript itself. There are all those criteria for "best" that bound one's thinking, that help to judge in the reading of a book. But beyond this there is an affinity of mind to mind. The author whose work reaches into the mind of the editor and makes the book stand up and live is the author whose work has the greatest chance of acceptance.

All books that come in, whether from old authors or new, under contract or not, are subject in the end to the same scrutiny. Is the writing good? Does the style fit the story? Do the characters live, do they step off the page and become people? Is the background understandable, believable? Does the plot work? Does it hold the reader's attention and at the same time let the characters behave as free people? What is good about this book, and what could be better? Does the good outweigh the bad? Can the bad be fixed and the good improved? How? What is the author saying? Does it come across through plot and character and not in didactic lessons thinly covered? Is the vision a true one, or does it at least seem so? Has the author fulfilled her vision?

Sometimes an editor can see immediately what is right and what is wrong with a book being considered. Sometimes it takes many readings before it is possible to hold a work in the mind as a whole and evaluate it in totality, as one must do.

Few books are just exactly right when they arrive. Authors cannot always — or maybe it is better to say they can never — see their work objectively, at least when it is new. They need someone from the outside to tell them what they have done and what they have not done. Good authors know this and welcome advice.

And so books from new authors and old go back with suggestions. Some of them go with contracts. Some of them go with the hope that a better book will return, ready for a contract. In the case of new authors, it is often the quality of the revisions that determine whether or not the book will be taken. It is whether or not the author looking at the book now through another person's eyes sees what she has accomplished and what she has failed to do, in terms of what she set out to do. A good author senses the problems and rewrites from that inner vision. A lesser author merely patches, and sometimes patches what she thinks the editor wants and not what the book demands.

Ultimately, of the books published, some will be "best" books and some will not. There are many reasons for publishing less than the best. A valued author writes a book he is fond of and will never be able to see it for what it is. The editor publishes it to get it out of the way and free the author to go on to something better. A new author has done a creditable book, one that has taught him a great deal. The next book will be better. But the first gets published to give him encouragement. A book that seemed to have great potential turns out to have less value than the editor thought. Yet it has been contracted for and is not a really bad book, so it gets published. The reasons go on and on.

Each book that is published, and most of those not published, begins with a vision, the vision of the author. An imperfect book by a person of high vision and great potential is better than a nearly perfect book by someone who sees through a limited lens. Not that the latter may not be published. But it is better to invest time and energy in an author who will grow and become better, than in someone who may be a one-book author.

The best is often hard to predict from a manuscript page when first seen. Only long and patient work may bring the value of the book into view. It is often easier to know what you are looking for than to know when you have found it.

The search for the best, then, is a little like Pilgrim's search for the celestial city. There are many false byways. There are many true paths that do not reveal themselves as readily as they might. Unlike Pilgrim, however, it is possible to find more than one celestial city in the course of the editor's long search for best books. Not everything an editor

publishes is the best, yet best does come and when it does and is recognized, it is welcome indeed.

It is a hard and difficult road to follow, the road to the best. And what does one find when one arrives at what one considers the best? Paul Hazard in *Books, Children and Men* (1944) said: "I like books that set in action truths worthy of lasting forever, and of inspiring one's whole inner life; those demonstrating that an unselfish and faithful love always ends by finding its reward, be it only in oneself; how ugly and low are envy, jealousy and greed; how people who utter only slander and lies end by coughing up vipers and toads whenever they speak. In short, I like books that have the integrity to perpetuate their own faith in truth and justice."

That is certainly part of it. But there is a slight ring of the didactic there, though like all good criteria it can be interpreted in many ways: it does not establish a rule, only a personal guide, for the concept of truth and justice can be as individual as fingerprints. Yet somehow, to me that definition is not really complete — it is not all that the best is and can be.

It may be that the best cannot be defined. David Daiches (1948) says, "Art is always more complex than any theory about it — more complex and yet more simple, for its meanings are subtle and manifold while its essence is single and even primitive."

Perhaps the answer lies outside the human sphere altogether. In *The Prelude,* Wordsworth (1959) says:

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou Soul that art the Eternity of Thought,
> That giv'st to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion! not in vain;
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human Soul;
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things,
> With life and nature, purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognize
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Perhaps it is this for which we look, all of us— editors, authors, critics, all those who have to do with literature for children, and the children themselves: that which ennobles the best in all of us and makes us kin to high objects and enduring ideas we can only begin to grasp. It is that which builds up, not theories or ideas, but passions in our souls that lift us beyond the petty and yet put us in the middle of life to exercise those passions in loving ways. That which will enable children, and therefore all of us, to take all that we are, all that we enjoy and all that we must endure, and use them well.

The books editors seek are those that embody the best the human spirit can achieve, for the time in which those books are written. Each age develops its own best out of itself. If we fail sometimes to reach our goal, to publish and develop the best, it is enough to know that we do sometimes succeed.

References

Bechtel, Louise Seaman. Books in search of children. *Speeches and essays by Louise Seaman Bechtel.* New York: Macmillan, 1969. (Specific article, Thinking about children's classics, from *The packet* [D.C. Heath, Fall 1955], Reprinted by the Christian House and School Society and by a number of Parent-Teacher Associations and libraries.)

Daiches, David. *A study of literature.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1948.

Hazard, Paul. *Books, children and men,* translated by Marguerite Mitchell. Boston, Mass.: The Horn Book, 1944.

Wordsworth, W. *The prelude* (Book I, Introduction, Childhood and School-Time, Lines 401-414, written 1795). London: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Defining a Good Children's Book

"Defining a Good Children's Book" was the topic for a panel discussion at the Ohio State University Conference on Children's Literature. The following articles by Stephen Roxburgh, Charlotte Zolotow, Madeleine L'Engle, and Ginny Moore Kruse represent the opening statements for that discussion.

A Task Doomed

by Stephen Roxburgh

I believe — and what you are about to hear is a sort of credo — I believe it is impossible to define a good children's book. And I'm not merely engaging in a semantic argument. On the contrary, I believe it is the task of anyone seriously involved with children's books — excepting children, of course — to try to define what a good children's book is; but it is a task doomed. So, why try?

To define something is, by definition, a process of establishing its limits. That is, to whatever extent a good children's book is *this*, it is not *that*, the distinction between this and that being a boundary, a limit. It is true, and has always been true, that people involved with children's books have a penchant for defining the form, or genre, or field, or whatever they choose to call it. Its limits are set in moral terms, with regard to subject, treatment and style, age level and reading level, and in the marketplace. Of this last, one can argue that children's books as we know them today owe their existence to a marketing decision made by John Newbery and others like him in the 18th century, historical testimony to the need for definition. But my point is that the definitions which abound in the field are time and time again proven to be inadequate. The limits are specious, plausible but not genuine. So, to repeat the question, why try?

Because, as George Eliot once wrote, "every limit is a beginning as well as an ending." Let me elaborate on this in the context of the history of children's books. Good children's books — or the matter in them — existed before there were books, for that matter before there were "children" as we think of them today. They were being written and "published" (the business has undergone radical transformations since its inception in the 18th century) in the form of chapbooks long before Newbery and other entrepreneurs came along to define the market. He and his successors (and competitors) were producing good children's books for decades when the "monstrous horde" — F. J. Harvey Darton's name for the group of women writers of moral didactic literature of the late-18th and early-19th century —insisted on righteous moral grounds what *good* children's books were. In 1865, Lewis Carroll's great "good children's book" was published, initiating the so-called golden age of children's literature.

In spite of what some critics think, good children's books have appeared since that golden age ended, around the time of the First World War. Even today—even in the United States—good children's books are being published, although quite a few of them will not be available to children if the "moral majority"—our very own monstrous horde—has its say. In short, good children's books have always been and will always be, in spite of definitions. Moreover, as my nickel tour of their history was meant to suggest, good children's books are often the result of a reaction to "good

children's books." If not an act of denial of some restrictive definition imposed on the field by the dominant culture, then an assertion that this, too, whatever this might be, is a good children's book. (The number of *bad* children's books resulting from the same denials and assertions is staggering, I must add, but, as they say, nothing comes easy.) Every limit *is* a beginning; every definition engenders its own refutation. To replace Eliot's dictum with the words of a contemporary songwriter, "one man's ceiling is another man's floor" . . . or wall . . . or platform.

Specific examples are too numerous to mention more than a few. Samuel Goodrich, known to history—if known at all—as Peter Parley, wrote *Higgledy Piggledy Pop* as a parody of the utter nonsense he felt was foisted on children when what they needed was instructional material. Ironically, what he meant as a bad example became his only substantial contribution. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *A Child's Garden of Verses* because he read what was available for children and thought "I can do better than that." Heinrich Hoffman, a German dentist, wrote *Struvwelpeter* for the children in his waiting room because in his opinion there were no good children's books around. These examples may not fit your definition of a good children's book—they don't even fit mine—but that makes my point; they fit somebody's. Also, these instances are probably more apocryphal than true. But consider, when any of us are doing what we do, making decisions, selections—about books for a child if you are a parent or librarian, or manuscripts for publication if you are an editor, images if you are an artist, a theme or style or even a word or phrase if you are a writer—we are doing it on the basis of a definition, articulated or not, of good children's books. But when we are at our best, our most daring, not being lazy or safe, we are inevitably trying to extend some limit, looking for the exceptional, that which exceeds the definition. Our reflective, analytical effort to define a good children's book is sabotaged again and again by our active, productive effort to provide a good children's book.

What we need then, if we are committed to this futile endeavor, is a definition that changes, adapting to the protean stuff that good children's books are. We need, if you will, a "dynamic definition." But that begs the question and, finally, is not very helpful. There is a passage from the poet T.S. Eliot that applies here. Indeed, it applies as well to life as to the matter before us. Eliot rejects definitions because they establish false limits, impose unreal patterns. He writes, "The pattern is new in every moment/And every moment is a new and shocking/Valuation of all we have been." Just so, I say, of good children's books. Every attempt to define them must be "a new and shocking valuation." This is the task we have set for ourselves—all of us together: teachers, librarians, critics, editors, artists, writers—we who determine what children's books are. If our definitions are inadequate, then we fail.

Something That Makes Childhood Less Lonely

by Charlotte Zolotow

My father-in-law was an imaginative, free-spirited, self-taught Russian painter who complained to me one afternoon about his next door neighbor.

"Stupid," he said, "he's a stupid man! I asked him three simple questions and he couldn't answer!"

"What did you ask him?" I said.

"Simple, simple," said Mr. Zolotow, "I said to him—tell me, what is love, what is art, what is life? And he had no answer!"

I suppose the poor neighbor was as amazed at the enormity of the simple questions as all of us are at trying to define in five minutes what makes a good children's book.

First, of course, it is exactly what makes a good adult book. All the criteria of good craftsmanship, talent, and quality of writing are the same. But there is one big difference—the voice!—the point of view of the writer.

Many fine adult writers can't write for children. Their view is too far removed, too intellectualized to have the immediacy a good children's book needs. But there are others—Madeleine is one, and E. B. White —whose voice is the same in his adult as in his children's books. "What I am really saying," White once wrote, "is that I love life and I think that comes through in everything I write." So it does for Mr. White! For his respect for life comes from the childlike open response he has to all human emotion. Many fine writers are too far removed from that direct, the-emperor-has-no-clothes-place, to write a good children's book.

There are many qualities that go into a good book—feeling, genuine emotion, integrity of purpose, beauty of language, a unique prose style, and an out-of-ordinary look at ordinary things. Sometimes a writer uses humor, sometimes fantasy, sometimes reality, but a good children's book leaves the child closer to understanding himself and other people, closer to some universal motif of which cats and dogs and trees, earth, ocean, sky, and human beings are all part.

Cervantes, in *Don Quixote*, says, "He who publishes a book runs a very great hazard, since nothing can be more impossible than to compose one that may secure the approbation of every reader." I thought of this listening to Sheila Egoff, since Paul Zindel, far from being a mockingbird has been one of the most original and innovative voices in children's literature. I am as proud to be his publisher as I am to have published such diverse writers for children's books as E. B. White, Barbara Wersba, M. E. Kerr, Mollie Hunter, Adrienne Jones, Arnold Lobel, Maurice Sendak, Shel Silverstein, and dozens of others who write *good* books for children.

Speaking then as only one reader/writer/editor and publisher, I'd say what makes a good book is the author's style and tone, for it conveys some essence of the writer himself. For a good children's book, that voice must be honest, direct, open to life as though every minute were new. Some authors, such as Paul Zindel, use hyperbole to reveal the world according to their view; others, like myself, use understatement, (letting you hear the words between the lines); others, humor or lyricism, mood or atmosphere to bring alive the plot and the characters and their interrelationships. One, or several, of these qualities is in all good books; and the closer they are to the writer's real personality, the more a young person will enter the writer's world and come away feeling something new about life or something he may already have known but which the author's unique lens brings into different focus, something that makes childhood less lonely.

What makes a good children's book is the writer, his openness to the world, his unique reality. "Fantasy," said Maurice Sendak, "is rooted eight feet deep in reality." Lately, realism in books has become a provocative word meaning—in the young adult field especially—books about problems, divorce, violence, hate, drugs, immorality, or mental disturbances. These things *are* reality of course, and are experiences our children face today, either for themselves or through their friends. But so, too, are the realities of sunrises, soft summer rains, love, and loyalty. There is a place in good books for children for all these things, treated with the dignity and conviction of a fine writer's mind. Bob Lipsyte says: "We must teach our children skepticism but not cynicism." A book that asks questions through the action of its characters starts the mind and emotions going more than a book that tries to answer intellectually what is love, what is life, what is art! It is the author's own quest, her own affection or horror or humor, her own exploration of the world through the plot or poetry or people in her books, that makes them genuine, and makes a good book for children.

As a publisher, I find certain books seem to work smoothly as I read them, seem to be written perfectly. But a week later, the story has dimmed in my mind, and the momentary reading pleasure has disappeared. Another book, which seemed flawed, will still haunt me. Scenes from it, a character, a phrase comes into my mind when I'm bathing or walking or cooking dinner. Something has taken hold and rooted, and though it may not be a perfect book, by my definition, it has the makings of a good one, for the reader wants to return to it again. The author's voice has deepened some large or small part of life, and through her art has extended the horizons of the child's mind and emotional capacity, and has touched his heart.

Believing Impossible Things

by Madeleine L'Engle

In *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, the White Queen commands Alice to believe seven impossible things before breakfast. I use this practice and I usually find it very easy. However, I have not been able to believe the impossibility of deciding what is a good children's book.

Several years ago I was teaching an intensive course at Kent State University on techniques of fiction. About halfway through the course a young woman came up to me and said, "I do hope you're going to tell us something about writing for children because that's what I'm taking this course for." I said, "What have I been teaching you?" She said, "Well, writing." I said, "Don't you write, when you write for children?" And she said, "Yes, but isn't it different?" I said, "No, the techniques of fiction are the techniques of fiction whether it is a book for adults or whether it is a book for children."

When you write a book which is ultimately going to be marketed for a child, usually your protagonist is a child, and is interested in the things that would interest a child. But *how* you write it, the depth of characterization, of syntax, has got to be just as good as a book written to be marketed for adults. The great 19th century critic, Sir Herbert Read, said that the chief difference between man and beast is syntax. We cannot afford to give our children poor syntax.

If I deserve a star in my crown, it is because I once prevented Maurice Sendak from murder. We were together on a panel for parents of the Hunter

College school for especially bright children, and one mother got up and said she was never going to allow her children to read such garbage as Beatrix Potter. That's when I stopped Maurice from murder. I knew this woman was wrong, simply from the text, but I did not know until Maurice calmed down enough to give a passionate defense of Beatrix Potter that her animal anatomy is absolutely correct, that she used to kill animals and take them apart in order to make sure her anatomy was correct. That's hardly sentimental writing for children.

When I try to put the adjective "good" to anything, I really come up against a block. We cannot, for instance, take a piece of paper and draw a line down along it and list our "good" characteristics on one side and our "bad" characteristics on the other. What is a good characteristic at one moment may be intolerable at another, and what is a dreadful characteristic may be all that saves us. During the 12 or so years when I couldn't get anything published, it was my *worst* characteristic—stubbornness, pigheadedness—that kept me going.

It has also been remarked that what is good or what reaches one age does not necesssarily reach another age. We do not live in the comparative peace and calm of the Victorian age. We don't have time for the long, leisurely book. We are more like the time in which Shakespeare wrote, and Shakespeare had to catch his audience's attention right away or he was going to lose them. The world was moving as rapidly then as it's moving now.

I'll close with Dante's saying that you could look at his great work of science fiction, *The Divine Comedy*, on four levels—and I think this is a way you can look at almost anything that's written. There is the literal level, the moral level, the allegorical level, and the anagogical level. The literal level is simply the story: what happens? The moral level is: what does this say? Now I found trouble in defining the difference between allegorical and anagogical and went to the two chief tools of imagery of the poet, simile and metaphor. The allegorical level is: this is *like* that. I can't describe this, but this is *like* it, as close as I can get to it. Whereas the anagogical level is the metaphor: This *is* that. And the anagogical level is nothing that a writer or an artist of any kind can do deliberately. It is what makes a book available in more than one culture. When that happens, that book may not be called "good," but it can be called enduring.

Discovering Good (New) Books through a Discussion Format

by Ginny Moore Kruse

The Cooperative Children's Book Center of Wisconsin is an examination, study, and research library for adults supporting teaching, learning, and research needs related to children's literature. Among the information and program services of the CCBC are monthly discussions of just-published books for children and young teenagers. These discussions provide one of the perspectives for my continuing discovery of "good" children's books midst those books yet too new for most reviewers' appraisals or for responses from children. It's the perspective from which I will speak today as one way to identify and define a good children's book.

Discussion participants include anyone who comes. Most have read the same 8 to 10 new books scheduled for discussion during the preceding three weeks. Not everyone is previously acquainted with each other. Discussants are usually school librarians, classroom teachers, public librarians, graduate library school students, education students, an occasional reviewer or writer, and faculty from the University of Wisconsin – Madison and other campuses. We range anywhere from 6 to 18 in number in any given month.

We discuss one book at a time utilizing the criteria for the Newbery and Caldecott Awards as well as those established for the American Library Association Notable Children's Books, the latter criteria containing elements of what constitutes a good book: literary quality; originality of text and illustration; clarity of style and language; excellence of illustration; excellence of design and format; the interest and value of the subject matter to children; and the likelihood of acceptance by child readers.

We begin discussion of each book with specific appreciative comments. No one may say "I liked it" without next trying to indicate exactly why. We look at elements of book design: typography, binding, layout, and choice of paper. We study each illustration and page spread at lap distances and at greater distance, as well. We cite examples we have found indicative of good writing: clarity, originality, freshness, and impact. We comment on potential child appeal.

Only after everyone with appreciative responses has done so do other types of observations become appropriate in this exercise of identifying and defining good books. When someone indicates

a particular book failed to meet her/his expectations, we try to determine a specific literary or artistic reason for this. Our comments are apt to be laced with information sought earlier in the week regarding accuracy from content specialists on campus, such as a pediatrics nursing educator, or a South Asian studies expert, or a historian with recognized research about slavery in the United States in the 19th century.

Following these phases of the discussion of each book, we begin to decide whether or not the book is a "good" book. We do not always agree, I assure you! Actually, we rarely use the word "good" in describing a book. (In thinking about this, I realize it may be due to my own undergraduate experience years ago when I wrote a paper on semantics and attempted to make a strong case against the general effectiveness of the adjective "good"!)

The perspectives of these monthly CCBC new book discussions provide each participant with several reactions to the same book and dialogue regarding newly-articulated thoughts. Each regular and occasional participant seems to value the opportunity highly.

Because of the discussions, I have become more aware of the variety and shapes of excellence among the many new books for children. From these discussions have come some personal illumination about books such as the ones I'm about to name, books which will serve today as exemplary of a variety of ways in which a book might be judged to be a "good" book.

What Happened In Hamelin by Gloria Skurzynski (Four Winds, 1979)—an accurate historical context for taut fiction in which the reader experiences the impact of a group become a mob capable of frenzied mass killing.

Wierd Henry Berg (Crown, 1980) and *Secret Lies* (Crown, 1981), both by Sarah Sargent, are fictional entertainment arenas in which plausible protagonists make real decisions and out of which light reading, thoughtful readers can perceive more than story.

Frost Hollows and Other Microclimates by Laurence Pringle (Morrow, 1981)—almost an essay about the little climates surrounding us as we plant tomatoes, fly kites, or cool off in summer under a shade tree; a good nonfiction book developed through careful research, written with respect for young curiosities and capabilities, illustrated with well-captioned photographs of high quality bearing a list of reliable sources of further information, and yet accessible to the second grader as well as the 13-year-old.

Black Child, poetry by Joyce Carol Thomas, illustrated with black and white drawings by Tom Feelings (Zamani Productions, 1981)—a sober, compassionate observation of the beauty and promise of black children in the face of an uncertain future.

Scary Stories To Tell in the Dark, collected from American folklore by Alvin Schwartz and illustrated with black and white drawings by Steven Gammell (Lippincott, 1981)—fully documented tales from oral and folk traditions in the U.S. containing valid slumber party and campfire scariness unmatched by the trendy macabre.

The Crane Wife, retold by Sumiko Yagawa, translated from the Japanese by Katherine Paterson, and illustrated by Suekichi Akaba (Morrow, 1981)—presents one of Japan's most beloved tales with illustrations using traditional Japanese watercolor technique and inventive perspective evoking Japanese art and culture in line and form.

Three by the Sea, by Edward Marshall with pictures drawn by James Marshall and printed in three colors (Dial, 1981)—a real book in a beginning format: three children make up and tell three different types of stories to each other at the beach in an original and entertaining book for new readers.

The Voyage Begun, by Nancy Bond (Margaret K. McElderry/Atheneum, 1981)—absorbing speculative fiction set only decades from today and peopled with memorable characters of several generations, both genders, and varied living styles.

The Gathering, by Virginia Hamilton (Greenwillow, 1981)—whose fantasy world created within the framework of modern evolutionary theory enables the concepts of time, change, power, and responsibility to be newly explored.

The Battle Horse, by Harry Kullman, translated from the Swedish by George Blecher and Lone Thygesen-Blecher (Bradbury, 1981)—a somber and compelling novel from Sweden for teenaged readers in which conflicts between class and gender are examined and themes of survival, justice, and romance are developed through literary allusions.

The list of good books could be much longer: *Lives of the Artists*, by M.B. Goffstein (Farrar, 1982);

Playing Beatie Bow, by Ruth Park (Atheneum, 1982); and *Good Night, Mr. Tom*, by Michelle Magorian (Harper, 1982) are only three of the new books we've identified as "good" through this discussion technique during recent months. This is why, at the end of each year, we publish our own list of good books—"CCBC Choices."

At a time when we adults ponder the fate of this planet; when lack of federal funds will continue to erode human and educational services to children; when the economy and new technologies will affect publishing even more than we've already seen; and when the sales volume of computer-controlled shopping mall and strip center book vendors is directly altering some of what gets published or kept in print for children; we must improve our knowledge of how to find and use good books to meet many different information needs as well as entertainment preferences.

At such a time, as I attempt to locate and appreciate good books for children, I find myself referring to a fine statement published in 1979, The International Year of the Child, by IBBY, the International Board on Books for Young People. The statement "Children's Books for a Better World" calls for the variety of "good" books necessary for children everywhere who, first, must be ensured of the ability to read, and second, must have a wide and rich selection of stylistically interesting, accurate, entertaining, beautiful, imagination-stretching, GOOD books to read!

Note: "CCBC Choices" is available annually at $1.00 from The Friends of the CCBC, Inc., P.O. Box 5288, Madison, WI 53705.

Stephen Roxburgh is editor-in-chief of children's books at Farrar, Straus, and Giroux; Charlotte Zolotow is editor, Charlotte Zolotow Books, Harper and Row; Madeleine L'Engle, whose full-length article appears on page 332 of this issue, is an award winning author from New York City; and Ginny Moore Kruse is director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center of Wisconsin.

tip

Louise M. Rosenblatt

The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response

The term *response* seems firmly established in the vocabulary of the theory, criticism, and teaching of literature. Perhaps I should feel some satisfaction at the present state of affairs since I am sometimes referred to as the earliest exponent of what is termed *reader-response* criticism or theory.[1] Yet the more the term is invoked, the more concerned I become over the diffuseness of its usage. In the days when simply to talk about the reader's response was considered practically subversive, it would undoubtedly have been premature to demand greater precision in the use of the term. Now that the importance of the reader's role is becoming more and more widely acknowledged, it seems essential to differentiate some of the aspects of the reading event that are frequently covered by the broad heading of "response."

Response implies an object. "Response to what?" is the question. There must be a story or a poem or a play to which to respond. Few theories of reading today view the literary work as ready-made in the text, waiting to imprint itself on the blank tape of the reader's mind. Yet, much talk about response seems to imply something like that, at least so fr as assuming the text to be all-important in determining whether the result will be, say, an abstract factual statement or a poem. Unfortunately, important though the text is, a story or a poem does not come into being simply because the text contains a narrative or the lines indicate rhythm and rhyme. Nor is it a matter simply of the reader's ability to give lexical meaning to the words.

Louise M. Rosenblatt is professor emeritus at New York University.

In order to deal with my assigned topic, it becomes necessary, therefore, to sketch some elements of my view of the reading process,[2] to suggest some aspects of what happens when reader meets text. (Note that although I refer mainly to reading, I shall be defining processes that apply generally to encounters with either spoken or written symbols.) This will require consideration of the nature of language, especially as manifested in early childhood. Only then shall I venture to develop some implications concerning children, literature, and response.

The Reading Process and the Reader's Stance

Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances. I use John Dewey's term, transaction, to emphasize the contribution of both reader and text. The words in their particular pattern stir up elements of memory, activate areas of consciousness. The reader, bringing past experience of language and of the world to the task, sets up tentative notions of a subject, of some framework into which to fit the ideas as the words unfurl. If the subsequent words do not fit into the framework, it may have to be revised, thus opening up new and further possibilities for the text that follows. This implies a constant series of selections from the multiple possibilities offered by the text and their synthesis into an organized meaning.

But the most important choice of all must be made early in the reading event—the overarching choice of what I term the reader's stance, his "mental set," so to speak. The reader may be seeking information, as in a textbook; he may want direc-

tions for action, as in a driver's manual; he may be seeking some logical conclusion, as in a political article. In all such reading he will narrow his attention to building up the meanings, the ideas, the directions to be retained; attention focuses on accumulating what is to be carried away at the end of the reading. Hence I term this stance *efferent*, from the Latin word meaning "to carry away."

If, on the other hand, the reader seeks a story, a poem, a play, his attention will shift inward, will center on what is being created *during* the actual reading. A much broader range of elements will be allowed to rise into consciousness, not simply the abstract concepts that the words point to, but also what those objects or referents stir up of personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes. The very sound and rhythm of the words will be attended to. Out of these ideas and feelings, a new experience, the story or poem, is shaped and lived through. I call this kind of reading *aesthetic*, from the Greek word meaning "to sense" or "to perceive." Whether the product of the reading will be a poem, a literary work of art, depends, then, not simply on the text but also on the stance of the reader.

I am reminded of the first grader whose teacher told the class to learn the following verses:

> In fourteen hundred and ninety-two
> Columbus crossed the ocean blue.

When called on the next day, the youngster recited:

> In fourteen hundred and ninety-three
> Columbus crossed the bright blue sea.

Questioned as to why she had changed it, she simply said she liked it better that way.

I submit that this represents a problem in stance. The teacher had wanted her to read efferently, in order to retain the date "1492." The pupil had read aesthetically, paying attention to the qualitative effect, to her own responses, not only to the image of the ship crossing the sea, but also to the sound of the words in her ear, and in this instance the discomfort evidently occasioned by the reversal of the normal adjective-noun order.

Freeing ourselves from the notion that the text dictates the stance seems especially difficult, precisely because the experienced reader carries out many of the processes automatically or subconsciously. We may select a text because it suits our already chosen, efferent or aesthetic, purposes. Or we note clues or cues in the text—the author announces the intention to explain or convince, for example, and we adopt the appropriate efferent stance. Or we note broad margins and uneven lines, and automatically fall into the stance that will enable us to create and experience a poem.

Any text, however, can be read either way. We may approach novels as sociological documents, efferently seeking to accumulate evidence concerning, say, the treatment of children in the 19th century. The "pop" poet may select a "job wanted" advertisement, arrange its phrases in separate lines, and thus signal us to read it aesthetically, to experience its human meaning, as a poem. Sometimes, of course, readers adopt an inappropriate attitude—for example, reading a political article aesthetically when they should be efferently paying attention to facts. And many people, alas, read the texts of stories and poems efferently.

Recognizing that the reader's stance inevitably affects what emerges from the reading does not deny the importance of the text in the transaction. Some texts offer greater rewards than do others. A Shakespeare text, say, offers more potentialities for an aesthetic reading than one by Longfellow. We teachers know, however, that one cannot predict which text will give rise to the better evocation — the better lived-through poem—without knowing the other part of the transaction, the reader.

Sometimes the text gives us confusing clues. I'm reminded of a letter a colleague received. "Dear Professor Baldwin," it began, "You will forgive my long silence when you learn about the tragedy that has befallen me. In June, my spouse departed from the conjugal domicile with a gentleman of the vicinity." The first sentence announces that we should adopt an aesthetic stance. The second would be appropriate in a legal brief, since the vocabulary seems adapted to an impersonal, efferent stance.

Any reading event falls somewhere on the continuum between the aesthetic and the efferent poles; between, for example, a lyric poem and a chemical formula. I speak of a *predominantly* efferent stance, because according to the text and the reader's purpose, some attention to qualitative elements of consciousness may enter. Similarly, aesthetic reading involves or includes referential or cognitive elements. Hence, the importance of the reader's *selective* attention in the reading process.

We respond, then, to what we are calling forth in the transaction with the text. In extreme cases it may be that the transaction is all-of-a-piece, so to speak. The efferent reader of the directions for first aid in an accident may be so completely absorbed in the abstract concepts of the actions ad-

vised that nothing else will enter consciousness. Or an aesthetic reader may be so completely absorbed in living through a lyric poem or may so completely identify with a character in a story that nothing else enters consciousness. But in most reading there is not only the stream of choices and syntheses that construct meaning; there is also a stream of accompanying reactions to the very meaning being constructed. For example, in reading a newspaper or a legal document, the "meaning" will be constructed, and there will be an accompanying feeling of acceptance or doubt about the evidence cited or the logical argument.

In aesthetic reading, we respond to the very story or poem that we are evoking during the transaction with the text. In order to shape the work, we draw on our reservoir of past experience with people and the world, our past inner linkage of words and things, our past encounters with spoken or written texts. We listen to the sound of the words in the inner ear; we lend our sensations, our emotions, our sense of being alive, to the new experience which, we feel, corresponds to the text. We participate in the story, we identify with the characters, we share their conflicts and their feelings.

At the same time there is a stream of responses being generated. There may be a sense of pleasure in our own creative activity, an awareness of pleasant or awkward sound and movement in the words, a feeling of approval or disapproval of the characters and their behavior. We may be aware of a contrast between the assumptions or expectations about life that we brought to the reading and the attitudes, moral codes, social situations we are living through in the world created in transaction with the text.

Any later reflection on our reading will therefore encompass all of these elements. Our response will have its beginnings in the reactions that were concurrent with the evocation, with the lived-through experience. Thus an organized report on, or articulation of, our response to a work involves mainly efferent activity as we look back on the reading event—an abstracting and categorizing of elements of the aesthetic experience, and an ordering and development of our concurrent reactions.

I have tried briefly to suggest some major aspects of my view of the reading process—reading as basically a transaction between the reader and the text; the importance of the reader's selective attention to what is aroused in consciousness through intercourse with the words of the text; the need to adopt a predominant stance to guide the process of selection and synthesis; the construction of efferent meaning or the participation in aesthetic evocation; the current of reactions to the very ideas and experiences being evoked. To develop the capacity for such activities is the aim of "the teaching of reading and literature." We shall find support and clarification in going on to consider children's early entrance into language and into literature. It will then perhaps be possible to arrive at some implications for desirable emphasis in the child's early transactions with texts.

Entrance into Language

The transactional view of the human being in a two-way, reciprocal relationship with the environment is increasingly reflected in current psychology, as it frees itself from the constrictions of behaviorism.[3] Language, too, is less and less being considered as "context-free."[4] Children's sensorimotor exploration of the physical environment and their interplay with the human and social environment are increasingly seen as sources and conditions of language behavior. During the prelinguistic period, the child is "learning to mean,"[5] learning the functions of language through developing a personal sound-system for communicating with others before assimilating the linguistic code of the social environment.

Recent research on children's early language supports William James's dynamic picture of the connection among language, the objects and relations to which it refers, and the internal states associated with them—sensations, images, percepts and concepts, feelings of quality, feelings of tendency. James says, "The stream of consciousness matches [the words] by an inward coloring of its own. . . . We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*."[6]

Werner and Kaplan, in their study of symbol formation, show us the child at first internalizing such "a primordial matrix" of sensations and postural and imaginal elements. The child's early vocables "are evoked by total happenings and are expressive not only of reference to an event external to the child," but also of "the child's attitudes, states, reactions, etc."[7] Evidence of this early sense of words as part of total happenings is the fact that some children at five years of age may still believe that the name is an inherent part of the

referent. *Cat* at first is as much an attribute of the creature as its fur or pointed ears. Thus, in language as in experience in general, the child is faced with the need for a process of differentiation of perception.[8] The child's movement toward conventional linguistic forms entails a sorting out of these various elements.

Werner and Kaplan describe the sorting-out process as an "inner-dynamic or form-building" or "schematizing" activity. Acquisition of language is a "twin process," they show us, because the child must learn to link the same internal, organismic state both to the sense of an external referent or object, on the one hand, and to a symbolic or linguistic vehicle, on the other. What links a word, cat, to its referent, the animal, is their connection with the same internal state.

Bates similarly sees the emergence of symbols as "the selection process, the choice of one aspect of a complex array to serve as the top of the iceberg, a light-weight mental token" that can stand for the whole "mental file drawer" of associations and can be used for higher-order cognitive operations.[9] In other words, the child learns to abstract from the total context in order to arrive at a generalized concept of "cat."

This process of decontextualization is, of course, essential to the development of the ability to think, to apply the symbol to new contexts and situations. The "mental token" is the public meaning of the word. Understandably, parents and schools welcome and foster this phase. But much less attention has been paid to the broad base of "the iceberg" of meaning.[10] "The sense of a word," Vygotsky reminds us, "is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole. . . . The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense. . . ."[11] Along with the cognitive abstraction from past experiences which is the public meaning of the word, there are the private kinesthetic and affective elements that comprise the complex, fluid matrix in which language is anchored.

The Literary Transaction

The connection can now be made with the view of the reading process that I have sketched. The role of selective attention in the two kinds of reading becomes apparent. In predominantly efferent reading, the child must learn to focus on extracting the public meaning of the text. Attention must be given mainly to the "token" top-of-the-inner-iceberg, to organizing the abstract concepts the verbal symbols point to. These can yield the information, the directions, the logical conclusions that will be the residue of the reading act.

In aesthetic reading, the child must learn to draw on more of the experiential matrix. Instead of looking outward mainly to the public referents, the reader must include the personal, the qualitative, kinesthetic, sensuous inner resonances of the words. Hence attention is turned toward what is immediately lived-through in transaction with the text, toward what is being shaped as the story or the poem.

Both efferent reading and aesthetic reading should be taught. If I concentrate on aesthetic reading, it is not only because our interest here today is in children and literature, but also because it is the kind of reading most neglected in our schools.

Contrary to the general tendency to think of the efferent, the "literal," as primary, the child's earliest language behavior seems closest to a primarily aesthetic approach to experience. The poet, Dylan Thomas, told a friend, "When I experience anything, I experience it as a thing and as a word at the same time, both amazing."[12] Such a bond between language and the inner experiential matrix continues to be stressed in recent studies of children's early language. Words are primarily aspects of sensed, felt, lived-through experiences:

> Beginning about the last quarter of the first year and continuing through the second, increased differentiations of self and other, the sharpening of self-awareness and the self-concept, and the ability to form and store memories enable the infant to begin the development of affective-cognitive structures, the linking or bonding of particular affects or patterns of affects with images and symbols, including words and ideas. . . .
>
> Since there is essentially an infinite variety of emotion-symbol interactions, affective-cognitive structures are far and away the predominant motivational features in consciousness soon after the acquisition of language.[13]

Dorothy White, in her classic diary of her child's introduction to books before age five, documents the transactional character of language. She notes how, at age two, experience feeds into language, and how language helps the child to handle further experience.

> The experience makes the book richer and the book enriches the personal experience even at this level. I am astonished at the early age this backward and forward flow between books and life takes place. With adults or older children one cannot observe it so easily, but here at this age when all a child's experiences are known and the books read are shared, when the voluble gabble which is her speech reveals all the associations, the interaction is seen very clearly. Now and again Carol mystifies me with a reference to life next door, or with some transposed pronunciation which defeats me, but on the whole I know her frame of reference.[14]

White also illustrates the private facet of the child's acquisition of the public language. Having observed the actual experiences that fed into the child's words, the mother realizes that she understands the child's particular meanings and emphasis on words that even the father cannot grasp. Of course, it is such private overtones that we all draw on in our aesthetic reading.

Parents and teachers have generally recognized signs of the young child's affinity for the aesthetic stance. Joseph Conrad tells us that the aim of the novelist is "to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see."[15] Children enthralled by hearing or reading a story or a poem often give various nonverbal signs of such immediacy of experience. They delightedly sway to the sound and rhythm of words; their facial expressions reveal sensitivity to tone; their postural responses and gestures imitate the actions being described. That they are often limited by lack of knowledge, by immature cognitive strategies, in no way contradicts the fact that they are living through aesthetic experiences, their attention focused on what, in their transaction with the words, they can see and hear and feel.

A most eloquent verbal sign that the story or poem is being aesthetically experienced is the child's "Read it again." White's account of her daughter's "voluble gabble" as stories are read testifies that a relaxed, receptive atmosphere, with no questions or requirements, is conducive to children's verbal expressions of that second stream of reactions to the work that is the source of "responses." White's book shows a child, even before age five, offering various kinds of verbal signs of aesthetic listening — questions, comments, comparisons with life experiences and with other stories, rejection because the story puzzles or frightens, or because it offers no links with the child's past experiences.

When an adolescent girl calls the story of a wallflower at her first dance "the greatest tragedy I have ever read" we must recognize that this is a sign of the intensity of the lived-through transaction with the text, and not a judgment on the relative potentialities of this book and, say, *King Lear*. This transactional process is especially demonstrated in early reading and listening to stories. White tells of reading to her three-year-old the story of a small boy who wakes one morning to find himself the sole inhabitant of his town. White remarks:

> All this to an older child might well represent a delirium of joy and liberty, but to Carol, whose pleasure is the presence of people, not their absence, it was stark tragedy. "He's all by himself," she said, overcome and deeply mournful. Paul's isolation obviously wounded and shocked her, but I had the feeling that in creating this dismay, the book provided her with the most tremendous emotional experience she has known in all her reading. However, here's the rub, this emotional experience was of a kind totally different from anything the author had planned to provide, for planned he had.[16]

The author, she points out, may plan a particular book, but "one cannot plan what children will take from it."

Understanding the transactional nature of reading would correct the tendency of adults to look only at the text and the author's presumed intention, and to ignore as irrelevant what the child actually does make of it. As in the instance just cited, it may be that the particular experience or preoccupations the child brings to the spoken or printed text permit some one part to come most intensely alive. Let us not brush this aside in our eagerness to do justice to the total text or to put that part into its proper perspective in the story. It is more important that we reinforce the child's discovery that texts can make possible such intense personal experience. Other stories, continued reading, the maturation of cognitive powers, will contribute to the habit of attending to the entire text or organizing the sequence of episodes into a whole. We have the responsibility first of all to develop the habit and the capacity for aesthetic reading. Responsibility to the total text and the question of

"the author's intention" comes later — with all the indeterminacy of meaning that implies.[17]

The notion that first the child must "understand" the text cognitively, efferently, before it can be responded to aesthetically is a rationalization that must be rejected. Aesthetic reading, we have seen, is not efferent reading with a layer of affective associations added on later. (I call this the "jam on bread" theory of literature.) Rather, we have seen that the aesthetic stance, in shaping what is understood, produces a meaning in which cognitive and affective, referential and emotive, denotational and connotational, are intermingled. The child may listen to the sound, hear the tone of the narrative "voice," evoke characters and actions, feel the quality of the event, without being able to analyze or name it. Hence the importance of finding ways to insure that an aesthetic experience has happened, that a story or a poem has been lived-through, before we hurry the young listener or reader into something called "response." This is often largely an efferent undertaking to paraphrase, summarize, or categorize. Evocation should precede response.

Maintaining Aesthetic Capacity

Why, if the capacities for aesthetic experience are so amply provided at the outset of the child's linguistic development, do we encounter in our schools and in our adult society such a limited recourse to the pleasures of literature? We cannot take the easy route of blaming television for this, since it was a problem already lamented at least 50 years ago.

One tendency is to assume a natural developmental loss of aesthetic capacity, or at the least, interest, as the child grows older. We often still share Wordsworth's romantic view that "Shades of the prison-house begin to close/Upon the growing boy."[18] Some believe that in the early school years children become mainly concerned with the "real" and reject "the worlds of the imaginative and the fantastic." This idea, and confusion of the aesthetic stance with the fictive, with the imaginative or fantasy, may have contributed to the neglect of literature in the middle years.

The child's problem of delimiting the objects and the nature of the real world may at a certain stage foster a preoccupation with clarifying the boundary between reality and fantasy. But distrust of fantasy should not be equated with rejection of aesthetic experience. Literary works representing "real" events and "real" people can be read with all the sensuous, kinesthetic, imaginative richness that are applied to fantasy. Imagination is needed also in cognitive processes, in the process of remembering, in thinking of the past, in thinking of alternative solutions to a problem. Again, we need to see that the reader's stance transcends the distinction between the real and the fictive.

The obvious question, in all such developmental generalization, is—to what extent are the changes observed due to innate factors and to what extent are they the result of environmental influences? Fortunately, an ethnographic emphasis is beginning to be valued in contemporary research on the teaching of English,[19] and I should wish only to broaden its purview. Hence the question: to what extent does the emphasis in our culture on the primarily practical, technical, empirical, and quantitative contribute to the reported loss of aesthetic receptivity as the child grows older? Why do we find teachers at every level, from the early years through high school and college, seeming always to be having to start from scratch in teaching poetry?

The fact of the great diversity of the cultures evolved by human beings is in itself testimony to the power of the environment into which the child is born. Anthropologists are making us aware of how subtle signals from adults and older children are assimilated by the infant. "In depth" studies of child-rearing and particular customs or rituals document the complexity of the individual's assimilation to his culture.[20] All who are concerned about education and children have a responsibility to interpret this process to our society, and to be actively critical of the negative aspects of our culture. Just as the medical profession is helping us relate our physical health to general environmental and cultural conditions, so we as professionals need to emphasize the importance of the child's general social, economic, and intellectual environment both outside and in the school.

A nurturing environment that values the whole range of human achievements, the opportunity for stimulating experiences, cultivation of habits of observation, opportunities for satisfying natural curiosity about the world, a sense of creative freedom—all of these lay the foundation for linguistic development. Reading, we know, is not an encapsulated skill that can be added on like a splint to an arm. If I have dwelt so long on the organismic basis of all language, it is because reading draws on the whole person's past transactions with the environment. Reading, especially aesthetic reading, ex-

tends the scope of that environment and feeds the growth of the individual, who can then bring a richer self to further transactions with life and literature. We must at least indicate awareness of broader underlying societal or cultural needs before we go on to talk about the teaching of reading, and especially the teaching of literature, the kind of reading our economy-minded school boards often consider elitist and dispensable.

In my sketch of the child's acquisition of the environing language system, I presented as a natural and desirable development the selective process by which the child detaches a sense of the public meaning of a verbal symbol from its personal organismic matrix. But in our society the emphasis, at home and at school, is almost entirely on that decontextualizing, abstracting process. Parents quite rightly welcome the child's abstracting-out of words so that they can be applied to other instances of the same category and be used in new situations. Of course, the child needs to participate in the public, referential linguistic system. Of course, the child needs to distinguish between what the society considers "real" and what fantasy. Of course, the rational, empirical, scientific, logical components of our culture should be transmitted.

Nevertheless, are these aptitudes not being fostered — or at least favored — at the expense of other potentialities of the human being and of our culture? The quality of education in general is being diluted by neglect of, sacrifice of, the rich organismic, personal, experiential source of both efferent and aesthetic thinking. Is there not evidence of the importance of the affective, the imaginative, the fantasizing activities even for the development of cognitive abilities and creativity in all modes of human endeavor?

Throughout the entire educational process, the child in our society seems to be receiving the same signal: adopt the efferent stance. What can be quantified — the most public of efferent modes — becomes often the guide to what is taught, tested, or researched. In the teaching of reading, and even of literature, failure to recognize the importance of the two stances seems to me to be at the root of much of the plight of literature today.

One of the most troubling instances of the confusion of stances is the use of stories to teach efferent reading skills. Is it not a deception to induce the child's interest through a narrative and then, in the effort to make sure it has been (literally, efferently) "understood," to raise questions that imply that only an efferent reading was necessary? Even more disconcerting is the neglect of the aesthetic stance when the declared aim is "the teaching of literature," when stories and poems are presented, not as exercises for reading skills, but presumably for their value as literature, for their capacity to present images of life, to entertain, to deal with human situations and problems, to open up vistas of different personalities and different milieus. Here, too, the concern in most classes still seems to be first of all with the kinds of response that can be met by efferent reading. Questions often ask for highly specific factual details — What did the boy do, where did he go, what did he see, what does this word mean? At the other extreme is the tendency to nudge the young reader toward a labeling, a generalization, a paraphrase, a summary that again requires an abstracting analytic approach to what has been read. Repeated questions of that sort soon teach the young reader to approach the next texts with an efferent stance. Studies of students' responses to literature have revealed the extent to which in a seemingly open situation the young reader will respond in ways already learned from the school environment.[21] The results of the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature demonstrate that the traditional teacher-dominated teaching of literature, with its emphasis on approved or conventional interpretations, does not produce many readers capable of handling their initial responses or relating them to the text. Questions calling for traditional analyses of character or theme, for example, reveal such shallowness of response.

Educators and psychologists investigating children's aesthetic activities and development reflect a similar tendency to focus on the efferent—a legacy, perhaps, from the hegemony of traditional behaviorist experimental research methodology. Investigations of children's use of metaphor seem often actually to be testing children's cognitive metalinguistic abilities. Studies of the "grammar" of story tend also to eliminate the personal aesthetic event and to center on the cognitive ability to abstract out its narrative structure. Stories or poems can thus become as much a tool for studying the child's advance through the Piagetian stages of cognitive or analytic thinking as would a series of history texts or science texts.

Implications for Teaching

What, then, are the implications for teaching? The view of language and the reading process I

have sketched demonstrates the importance of the early years for the development of adult readers able to share in the pleasures and benefits of literature. The theoretical positions I have sketched apply, I believe, throughout the entire educational span, from the beginning reader to the adult critic. At every stage, of course, knowledge of students and books is essential to the sound application of any theoretical guidelines. At best, I can only suggest criteria for differentiating between potentially counterproductive or fruitful practices. I shall undoubtedly only be offering theoretical support for what many sensitive teachers are already doing.

A reading stance is basically an expression of purpose. Children will read efferently in order to arrive at some desired result, some answer to a question, some explanation of a puzzling situation, some directions as to procedures to be followed in an interesting activity.

Aesthetic reading, by its very nature, has an intrinsic purpose, the desire to have a pleasurable, interesting experience for its own sake. (The older the students, the more likely we are to forget this.) We should be careful not to confuse the student by suggesting other, extrinsic purposes, no matter how admirable. That will turn attention away from participating in what is being evoked.

Paradoxically, when the transactions are lived through for their own sake, they will probably have as by-products the educational, informative, social, and moral values for which literature is often praised. Even enhancement of skills may result. By the same token, literary works often fail to emerge at all if the texts are offered as the means for the demonstration of reading skills.

Exercises and readings that do not satisfy such meaningful purposes for the child, but are considered defensible means of developing skills, should be offered separately, honestly, as exercises. If needed, they should be recognized as ancillary and supplementary to the real business of reading for meaning, whether efferent or aesthetic.[22]

I speak of both the teaching of efferent reading and the teaching of aesthetic reading because the distinctions in purpose and process should be made clear from the outset. (Of course, I do not mean to imply theoretical explanation of them to the child.) If reading is presented as a meaningful, purposive activity, and if texts are presented in meaningful situations, the two kinds of stance should naturally emerge. Texts should be presented that clearly satisfy one or another purpose. Given the linguistic development of the child, probably there should be greater emphasis in the earlier stages on aesthetic listening and reading.

This view of the two stances opens up the necessity for a new and more rounded concept of comprehension in both efferent and aesthetic reading. I shall venture here only the suggestion that this will involve attention to the transactional, two-way, process and to affective as well as cognitive components of meaning. Recent interest of some psychologists in the role of context in comprehension indicates movement in this direction.[23]

In the teaching of literature, then, our primary responsibility is to encourage, not get in the way of, the aesthetic stance. As the child carries on the process of decontextualization that serves the logical, analytic, cognitive abilities whose development Piaget traced so influentially, we need also to keep alive the habit of paying selective attention to the inner states, the kinesthetic tensions, the feelings, the colorings of the stream of consciousness, that accompany all cognition, and that particularly make possible the evocation of literary works of art from texts.

Much of what we need to do can fortunately be viewed as a reinforcement of the child's own earliest linguistic processes, richly embedded in a cognitive-affective matrix. Transactions with texts that offer some linkage with the child's own experiences and concerns can give rise aesthetically to new experiences. These in turn open new linguistic windows into the world. Recall that when I refer to a reading event, it can be either hearing the text read or having the printed text. Both types of literary experience should continue into the elementary years.

A receptive, nonpressured atmosphere will free the child to adopt the aesthetic stance with pleasant anticipation, without worry about future demands. There will be freedom, too, for various kinds of spontaneous nonverbal and verbal expression during the reading. These can be considered intermingled signs of participation in, and reactions to, the evoked story or poem.

After the reading, our initial function is to deepen the experience. (We know one cannot predict developments in a teaching situation, but we can think in terms of priority of emphasis.) We should help the young reader to return to, relive, savor, the experience. For continuing the focus on what has been seen, heard, felt, teachers have successfully provided the opportunity for various forms of nonverbal expression or response: drawing, painting, playacting, dance. These may sometimes become

ends in themselves, perhaps valuable for a child's development, but only very generally relevant to the reading purposes. Such activities can, however, offer an aesthetic means of giving form to a sense of what has been lived through in the literary transaction. This can give evidence of what has caught the young reader's attention, what has stirred pleasant or unpleasant reactions. This can lead back to the text.

Requests for verbal responses create the greatest hazards. Adults may, often unconsciously, reveal a testing motive. Perhaps there will be a suggestion of what the approved or "correct" response should be. Sometimes there is a tacit steering toward an efferent or analytic stance, toward the kinds of subjects the adult thinks interesting or important. The reader is often hurried away from the aesthetic experience and turned to efferent analysis by questions such as those appended to stories in various basal readers and anthologies and by teachers' questions or tests "checking whether the student has read the text." Questions that call for the traditional analyses of character, setting, and plot are often premature or routine, contributing to shallow, efferent readings.

Some object that the formalists and post-structuralists are right in identifying literature with its system of conventions, its technical traits. My reply is that, by focusing on these components of the text, they fail to do justice to the total aesthetic experience. Metaphor, narrative structure, linguistic conventions, verbal techniques are, of course, important elements of "literary" texts, and they contribute much to the quality of the aesthetic transaction. But they are vacuous concepts without recognition of the importance of stance. Poetic metaphors or narrative suspense, for example, become operative, come into existence, only if the reader pays attention to the inner states that these verbal patterns arouse. After this repeatedly happens, we can communicate to our students the appropriate terminology — when they need it! "Form" is something felt on the pulses, first of all.

How, then, can we deal with the young reader's responses without inhibiting the aesthetic experience? Two answers to this quite real dilemma suggest themselves. First, a truly receptive attitude on the part of teacher and peers — and this requires strong efforts at creating such trust — can be sufficient inducement to children to give spontaneous verbal expression to what has been lived through. Once nonverbal or verbal comments have given some glimpse into the nature of what the young readers have made of the text, the teacher can provide positive reinforcement by leading to further reflection on what in the experienced story or poem had triggered the reactions. Comments by other children and the teacher, of course, also contribute to this imaginative recall of the experience.

Second, if for some reason the teacher finds it appropriate to initiate discussion, remarks (or questions, if necessary!) can guide the reader's attention back toward the reading event. Questions can be sufficiently open to enable the young readers to select concrete details or parts of the text that had struck them most forcibly. The point is to foster expressions of response that keep the experiential, qualitative elements in mind. Did anything especially interest? annoy? puzzle? frighten? please? seem familiar? seem weird? The particular text and the teacher's knowledge of the readers involved will suggest such open-ended questions. The habit of the aesthetic stance, of attention to concrete detail, will be strengthened for further reading. Cognitive abilities, to organize, to interpret, or to explain, will be rooted in the ability to handle responses. (And enhanced "reading skills" will probably be a by-product!)

The young reader will be stimulated to make the connections among initial responses, the evoked work, and the text. He may then be motivated to return to the actual words of the text, to deepen the experience. As students grow older, sharing of responses becomes the basis for valuable interchange. Discovering that others have had different responses, have noticed what was overlooked, have made alternative interpretations, leads to self-awareness and self-criticism.[24]

At the opening of these remarks, I mentioned the need to clarify my own version of reader-response theory, but felt no urge to survey the gamut of competing theories. It seems important, however, to recall that the transactional theory avoids concentration solely on the reader's contribution or on feeling for its own sake,[25] but centers on the reciprocal interplay of reader and text. For years I have extolled the potentialities of literature for aiding us to understand ourselves and others, for widening our horizons to include temperaments and cultures different from our own, for helping us to clarify our conflicts in values, for illuminating our world. I have believed, and have become increasingly convinced, that these benefits spring only from emotional and intellectual participation in evoking the work of art, through reflection on our own aesthetic experience. Precisely because every aes-

thetic reading of a text is a unique creation, woven out of the inner life and thought of the reader, the literary work of art can be a rich source of insight and truth. But it has become apparent that even when literature is presented to young readers, the efferent emphasis of our society and schools tends to negate the potential interest and benefits of the reading. Literature is "an endangered species." By establishing the habit of aesthetic evocation and personal response during the elementary years, teachers of children's literature can make a prime contribution to the health of our culture.

Notes

1. Tompkins, Jane P. (Ed.) *Reader-response criticism.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, p xxvi; Suleiman, Susan R. and Crosman, Inge (Eds.) *The reader in the text.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 45.

2. Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The reader, the text, the poem.* Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978 presents the fullest statement of the transactional theory. The present article cannot deal with such matters as "correctness" of interpretation, the author's intention, the openness and constraints of the text, or the role of the critic.

3. This is conveniently documented by articles by 11 leading psychologists (Jerome Bruner, Richard Lazarus, Ulric Neisser, David McClelland, et al.) on "the state of the science" in *Psychology Today*, May 1982, pp. 41-59. See especially the article by Ulric Neisser.

4. Keller-Cohen, Deborah. Context in child language, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1978, *7*, pp. 433-482.

5. Halliday, M.A.K. *Learning to mean.* New York: Elsevier, 1975.

6. James, William. *The principles of psychology.* New York: Dover Publications, pp.245-246.

7. Werner, Heinz, and Kaplan, Bernard. *Symbol formation.* New York: Wiley, 1963, p. 18.

8. Gibson, E.J. *How perception really develops.* In David Laberge and S. Jay Samuels (Eds.), *Basic Processes in Reading.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1975, p. 171; Rommetveit, Ragnar. *Words, meanings, and messages.* New York: Academic Press, 1968, pp. 147, 167; Werner and Kaplan, *Symbol Formation*, pp.23-24 and *passim.*

9. Bates, Elizabeth. *The emergence of symbols.* New York: Academic Press, 1979, pp. 65-66.

10. See Dewey, John. *How we think.* Lexington, Mass.: D.C.Heath, 1933, Ch. X; Dewey, John. Qualitative thought, *Philosophy and civilization.* New York: Minton, Balch, 1931, pp. 93-116.

11. Vygotsky, L.S. *Thought and language*, (Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar, Ed. and trans.) Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1962, p. 8.

12. Tedlock, Ernest (Ed.) *Dylan Thomas.* New York: Mercury, 1963, p. 54.

13. Izard, Carroll E. On the ontogenesis of emotions and emotion-cognition relationships in infancy. In Michael Lewis and Leonard Rosenblum (Eds.), *The development of affect.* New York: Plenum Press, 1978, p. 404.

14. White, Dorothy. *Books before five.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 13.

15. Conrad, Joseph. Preface. *The nigger of the narcissus.* New York: Doubleday, Page, 1922, p. x.

16. White, p.79.

17. The problems of validity in interpretation and of the author's intention are treated in Rosenblatt, *The reader, the text, the poem*, Chapters 5 and 6.

18. Wordsworth, William. Ode, intimations of immortality. *Poetical works.* London: Oxford University Press, 1959, p.46.

19. See *Research in the teaching of English, 15* (4), December 1981, pp. 293-309, 343-354, and *passim.*

20. Bateson, Gregory, and Mead, Margaret. *Balinese character.* New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1942; Geertz, Clifford. *The interpretation of cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1973.

21. Purves, Alan. *Literature education in ten countries.* Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1973.

22. Cf. Huey, Edmund Burke. *The psychology and pedagogy of reading.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968 (original edition, 1908), pp. 345, 380.

23. See Harste, Jerome C., and Carey, Robert F. Comprehension as setting. In *New perspectives on comprehension*, Monograph in Language and Reading Studies, Indiana University, No. 3, October 1979.

In a volume and an article that reflect the psychologists' usual preoccupation with efferent reading, I find this concession: "It may be in the rapid interplay of feelings . . . that the source of the creation of ideas, later to receive their analytic flesh and bones, may be found. If so, how sad it would be if it were discovered that the real problem of many readers is that their instruction so automatizes them that they do not develop a feeling for what they read or use the feelings available to them in the development of new understandings from reading." Spiro, Rand J. Constructive processes in prose comprehension and recall. In Rand J. Spiro, Bertram Bruce, and William Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension.* Hillside, N.J.: L Erlbaum, 1980, p. 274.

24. Rosenblatt, L. *Literature as exploration*, 1976 (distributed by the National Council of Teachers of English) develops further the implications for teaching.

25. The recent publication of *On Learning to Read*, by Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Zelan, with its subtitle, *The Child's Fascination with Meaning*, and its emphasis on response, leads me to disclaim any actual resemblance to my views. These authors reiterate what many of us, from Dewey on, have been saying about the importance of meaning and the child's own feelings, and about the narrow, dull approach of much teaching of beginning reading. But the book's concentration on a doctrinal psychoanalytic interpretation of response, disregard of the process of making meaning out of printed symbols, and treatment of the text as a repository of ready-made meanings or didactic human stereotypes, add up to an inadequate view of the relationship between reader and text.

Susan I. Hepler
Janet Hickman

"The Book Was Okay. I Love You"— Social Aspects of Response to Literature

Anyone who spends time in the serious observation of children with books, as we have, will agree with Louise Rosenblatt (1978) that response to literature is a unique personal transaction between text and reader, and, we might add, between text and listener. Certainly we have seen that one text does not necessarily bring the same response from individuals whom we might expect to be very much alike. Take the case of two 4-year-olds hearing *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1902) for the first time. "This is too scary," whispers one of them. "Don't read it again." The other child inches closer to the book to touch the pictures. "He's going to whack him on the head!" she predicts. "This book is great!"

While young children wear their uniqueness openly, like a badge, it takes more careful observation to see the older child's personal concerns at work in the transaction. Sometimes, we note, this means that stated responses come out sounding as if they have very little to do with the text. Sam, a 10-year-old boy, is talking about how much he identified with the main character in *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls (1961), a book which took him two weeks to read. Suddenly he muses,

> I don't know. If you think "I'm not going to be here all the time, what's it going to be like when I'm gone — Pooh! Out of there — where am I going to be?" I just might be in one of my favorite books or something. When you're dead, you'd think you might still be alive or thinking. When you're dead, you can become a book — a part of a book.

The death of the main character's two dogs may have triggered Sam's thinking about where book characters come from or what happens to people after they die, an example of the unique personal transaction which text and reader create.

Observing children with books has also made it possible for us to explore some of the developmental aspects of children's response which Arthur Applebee (1978) has described. One thing which stands out in this regard is that children use characteristic modes of responding which seem to be age related. Primary children are more motor-oriented, for instance, given to spontaneous movement and deliberate acting out of bits of story, while middle graders are more likely to rely on their own verbal abilities. It is children's talk, of course, that seems most to reflect their levels of cognitive development. Seven year olds discussing Jack Kent's cumulative folk tale, *The Fat Cat* (1971), were fascinated by the mechanics of the action in which the cat eats everything and everyone he meets. One protested that the cat "couldn't get all those great big people in his mouth," and another questioned whether the woodcutter who released the victims from the cat's stomach would be able to "put the bones back together." Children of this age are often absorbed in the task of articulating their understanding of the differences between real and make-believe. When we know that, we accept

Susan I. Hepler recently received the Ph.D. degree in education from The Ohio State University; Janet Hickman is a lecturer in education at The Ohio State University.

their questioning of the literal possibilities in the story as a very reasonable sort of response.

We also have evidence to support Norma Schlager's (1978) argument that children's satisfaction with story, as well as their understanding of it, is related to their stages of development. Children in one fifth and sixth grade classroom voted Joan Aiken's *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (1963) the best book the teacher had read aloud so far that year. The clear-cut action and the melodramatic style of the story gave readers continuous footing in the text. Children said, "The good and bad were distinct. There wasn't any middle" and "They describe the people really well so you know what was happening every time." Another child added, "It seems like I just *saw* it, like a TV program." It appears that these children enjoyed a book in which issues were not complex, the outcome was happy, good was greatly rewarded, and villainy roundly punished. This may remind us that middle graders, who can appreciate some of life's complexities, nonetheless long occasionally to return to a stage in development where some answers are easy. Andre Favat (1977) believed that fairy tales functioned in much the same way, as a more securely predictable world for readers who were just beginning to know how insecure and unpredictable the world can actually be.

In the time that we have been involved in classroom observations, however, we have found that there are striking aspects of children's response which are neither developmental nor personal, but social. Literature is, after all, a reflection of and a key to human experience. The younger the child, the more likely he or she is to experience literature itself in a context of human interaction — being read to, read with, or enticed into a story. The literary transaction, the one-to-one conversation between author and audience, is frequently surrounded by other voices.

Consider the primary child who laboriously wrote, when asked by her teacher for an opinion of a new book, "The book was okay. I love you." For this child, the book is not yet quite separate from the voice that reads it aloud; good feelings about teacher and story are intertwined. In the classroom, the author is not the only person behind the book. Throughout our observation we have noted that what chidren do with books, what they say about them, and what they seem to think of them are all influenced in part by other people.

A Community of Readers

We have proposed the idea of a "community of readers" to let us talk about how children, in alliance with friends and teacher, work together to help each other learn to read. Our observations have been made in classrooms where school reading does not differ from reading which the rest of the world does—where children read for pleasure and learn to read by reading books. We are struck by the ways children use the classroom community to "pick their way to literacy," to borrow a phrase from Margaret Meek (1982).

Middle grade children use each other for information about what to read. The stamp of several readers' approval on a particular book assures the novice reader that someone has found satisfaction therein. A fifth grade girl reads Betsy Byars' *The Pinballs* (1977), saying "Everyone else in the class read it so I figured I ought to, too." Another child reports that "I usually read what Tammy reads" and a comparison of the reading records of the two girls confirms this. A fifth grade boy chooses William Sleator's *The Green Futures of Tycho* (1981) "because it sounded good. And Sherry read it and so did Tom."

Just as adults use friends or the best seller list to pick the perfect book to take to the beach, children use these personal testimonies of their friends to help them decide what to read. Many teachers report that certain books such as Judy Blume's *Superfudge* (1980) or Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* (1961) or Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974) are so encrusted in peer recommendations that they simply pass from hand to hand during the year until most of the class has read the book.

Peer recommendation makes the act of choosing a book more efficient and less risky. As a sixth grader said,

> I like it when people recommend books to me. A lot of people will do that—look on the bookshelves and say "Oh, here's a good book" and show it to me. I like that because it's easier for me. You don't have to search through everything and most of my friends just like the same type of book I like. So, if they find a book, I'll believe them and I'll try it. Normally, I'll like the book.

The tantalizing question about recommendation is: What do the recommended books have in common? Certain books are ready currency in the classroom. Short books, funny books, books with exciting or sensational elements, and books with interesting characters all invite comment. These books have a "talkable face," an easy "sharability." Whatever the drawing factor, these books make it easy for a child to say to another "Have you read this?" or "Listen to this!" or, in the case of a picture book, "Look. Did you see this?" As far as children's willingness to recommend the book is concerned, this talkable face is more important than any kind of critical integrity the book might or might not have.

Other books with "talkable faces" are those such as Colby's *Fighting Gear of World War II* (1961), *The Guinness Book of World Records* (McWhirter, 1975), or informational books such as David Macaulay's architectural construction books, *Pyramid* (1975) or *Unbuilding* (1980). These books invite children to read pieces and discuss the pictures. Boys linger over captions tying information to what they already know by talking about the pictures. Joke books are highly sharable as are some poetry books. Three 10-year-old boys hovered over a copy of Jack Prelutsky's poetry book, *Rolling Harvey Down the Hill* (1980). They first decided who would be which character: "I'm the one who tells the story," "I'm the smart one," or 'I don't want to be Willy. He's the one who ate the worm." They then traded off in reading lines of the poems in the book, laughing and commenting on Victoria Chess's illustrations.

It is precisely this opportunity for talk about books and reading which makes the community of readers of such value to its members. Much of this talk occurs incidentally, and teachers may be unaware of the many book-related small exchanges that happen. For instance, a child glances at a book on the desk of his friend or at one resting on the windowsill and says "It that any good?" and a small book discussion ensues. A child finishes a book and sighs, "That was a great book" and her friend says, "Can I read it after you?" A boy studying *Anno's Counting Book* (Anno, 1977) suddenly says to his deskmate "Oh, neat. Each time you turn a page there are more houses and roads. See? Three roads. Three houses. Three boats."

Sometimes, too, the talk seems merely companionable, such as the two boys who lie on their backs in a loft area both reading separate copies of Fritz's *What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?* (1976). "Wait. . . . Okay," says one and both turn pages simultaneously. "Dang, he's smart," offers the other, as both continue to read together.

At other times, talk helps children remember and allows the community to help members fill in the gaps. Speaking in front of groups without support is terrifying for many children, but if they know that others will chime in and help, as a family helps each other in a shared context, the talking is less risky. For instance, a sixth grade boy is recounting to the class the plot of *The Pinballs* (Byars, 1977) and falters over a word: "Harvey's got this . . . leg's all red. . . . something that happens when you get a cut. . . ." *"Infection,"* add several voices, and the boy is able to continue his narrative.

Talk about books helps children increase the predictability of certain books or rehearse the content as they read. A child who retells the story of Marilyn Sachs' *Veronica Ganz* (1968) is organizing the book for herself and is considering what the audience is likely to enjoy hearing. At the same time, a child in the audience may be deciding to read this book because she now has a head start on the plot, knowledge of a few of the characters, and the assurance that the book has produced at least one satisfied reader.

Exploring Meanings

In a larger sense, talk helps children negotiate meanings, a task which Jerome Bruner (1982) terms central to the learning process. It is often difficult for a child to express meaning clearly. For instance, a sixth grade boy struggles to explain why he felt *The Green Futures of Tycho* (Sleator, 1981) was a significant book. "It's a different story, like sometime it's hard to understand. He has different futures and he himself was being mean and it all had to do with this egg that changed. I haven't read a book like it. It's different."

This struggle to explain is made easier by having listeners who share your context. Children may form loose alliances in the classroom community which let them negotiate this meaning by explaining themselves and their reading to others. A group of fifth grade boys, "The Gang of Four," were observed over the course of a school year. During the first five months of school, they read informational books and nonfiction together; they sat together and talked about pictures and captions; they read aloud interesting parts of the books, they asked and answered questions; and perhaps most importantly, they shared each other's enthusiasm

for reading. In the spring, when they later turned to the reading of fiction together, they continued to behave as a small group within the larger community, using talk as a way of organizing meaning for themselves.

Children's talk in groups allows them to work through meanings that might not otherwise be articulated. Much of this working through may appear pointless and rambling to the casual observer. But, as Douglas Barnes points out in *From Communication to Curriculum* (1976), transcripts of children's dialogue reveal complex child understandings. He says, "It may be that in the kind of discussion that we are calling 'exploratory' this looser and less explicit way of linking ideas encourages flexibility and the 'trying out' of half-formed thoughts" (p. 66).

What appears to the casual observer as half-formed may, in the child's context of the community, carry great meaning. Children describe a book as "interesting," "a good friendship story," or "an I-book." They explain that a book is good "because it had no boring parts" and other child readers nod in agreement, knowing exactly what the child reader means.

It is clear that children do not utter themselves in the same ways as do adults. Thus, a 10 year old may, like the young child in our title, combine her subjective feelings about a book and the context in which she read or heard it with objective statements about the book. Nathan, a confirmed fantasy lover in fifth grade, said "Fantasy is more interesting than other books. I just think they're better books. A lot of books some people like are dumb." While *interesting, better,* and *dumb* may be variously defined by different readers, they reveal that Nathan has an idea that fantasies may be more complex in plot and character development and that they often demand more from the reader than do some of the books of realistic fiction which his classmates are consuming.

Children's statements, while often disorganized, inarticulately framed, confused, or complex, reveal that they are developing an awareness of how literature works. The child who says of a book that "the words were different—I don't know how to say it but they were" may have a beginning understanding of literary style.

Often, in the fast pace of classroom talking, children's most perceptive comments are tossed off casually or never heard by adults. A spirited discussion between two fifth graders considered whether M. B. Goffstein's quiet little book, *An Artist* (1980), was of any value. "It's so simple it shouldn't even be a book," snapped a girl. "You just don't understand it," said a boy. "If you understood it, you'd like it." Another tossed-off comment came at the end of a whole-class discussion about books in which the main character shows courage. As one sixth grader walked off to get his safety patrol belt, he said to no one in particular, "Well, a lot of books show courage. It takes courage just to go through every day." The community as a whole may not recognize these moments of perception but it is helpful for us to know, as teachers, that even though we may not hear them, they are there nonetheless.

Talk is the most obvious way, but not the only way, that children explore meaning in literature. If we accept the notion that children are active learners, then it makes sense to think they will want to manipulate stories as well as math materials, to work with characters and events and settings and words in concrete ways. The community of readers furnishes an eager audience as well as a pool of resource ideas for response activities that go beyond talk—using a story as the core of a drama, for instance, or as a basis for writing, or for interpretation with paints or collage.

Here is seven-year-old Mickey, who has spent some time looking at the wordless picture book *Anno's Journey* (Anno, 1978), and has talked about what is happening in the pictures with several friends who are equally fascinated by the tiny figures moving along the roads in Anno's drawings. Later he draws his own crayon picture, on an 8½ by 11 sheet, of a horse, a wagon, and a man. He studies his work for a while, then finds another sheet of paper, tapes it to the first, and extends the road on which his figures stand, adding a horse and an apple tree. "I'm drawin' a picture of that book," he says. And in so doing, he is confirming for himself its focus on space and sequence. In fifth grade, J. P. makes a board game based on Mollie Hunter's *A Stranger Came Ashore* (1975), incorporating symbols appropriate to the book such as a raven, a violin, gold pieces, and the cave where the Great Selkie's skin is hidden. The reward and penalty cards he designs are printed with directives such as "Old Da dies, go back 4 spaces." J. P., too, is playing with the elements of the story, pushing them into a demanding new form.

In the process of both these boys' activities, other children sanction their work with attention and support ("What you doin'?" "That's neat") and nurture the work with additional ideas ("Why don't

you do it this way?" "You know what you could do? You could . . ."). In these classrooms, one perception of a good book is a book you can do something with, a book with inherent possibilities for interpretation and extension activities: "That would make a good play," or "Wouldn't that be a great picture?" And the classroom community in turn reinforces those responses by serving as an appreciative audience for the products.

Learning Reader Behavior

Perhaps the single most important function of the community of readers is to provide a model set of reader behaviors which tell children how readers act. Readers enjoy books, thinks the child, and I do, too. Readers show their enjoyment by talk and actions, and I can contribute to this talk and action, too. Thus, two kindergarteners who do not yet decipher meaning from print, nonetheless sit together and tell each other Pat Hutchins' story of *Rosie's Walk* (1968). "Here's where the fox gets bashed with a rake. Now he's gonna get stung." A second grader just beginning to feel real confidence in reading on her own claims a corner by the bookcase during silent reading time and shares a picture book with a totally imaginary audience, pronouncing the words under her breath and holding the book carefully out to one side, the way her teacher does. She pauses at the end for questions and comments because that is part of the routine for sharing books in her classroom. A first grader who has heard his teacher talk about the artist's role in a picture book holds up one of his favorites, Leo Lionni's *Pezzettino* (1975), and tells his group something about the story and the illustrations. The pictures are made from cut paper, he says, and then asks for a show of hands on the question "How many people think Leo Lionni is a good cutter?"

Learning reader behavior is not limited to the early stages. Older children continue to take on new examples of how to categorize books, what to value in books, and how to talk about books in the social setting of the classroom. As with other kinds of language learnings, children's understandings about literature race ahead of their facility with the words to express this understanding. Readers who have a sense of what responses should sound like are sometimes caught short in critical vocabulary. Thus a fifth grader reports that Blume's *Superfudge* (1980) is a "sequin" to her *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* (1972). Another child says he likes both fiction and fantasy, while a third carefully explains that a piece of realistic fiction is a fantasy because "you can fantasize in it. It's like you feel like you're there."

The beginnings of a specialized vocabulary for talking about books and new strategies for comparing and evaluating seem to come largely from the teacher's influence within the community of readers. Once a teacher emphasizes an aspect of a book, what she has touched echoes through the year. The teacher's calling attention to multiple interpretations of a title, such as Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), allowed children to consider the title as metaphor. Several months later a boy carefully explained to the class, unasked, the meaning of the title, *The Pinballs* (Byars, 1977). A reader asked another reader of Pevsner's book, *Keep Stompin' Till the Music Stops* (1977), "Have you gotten to where he says that yet? It tells you right in the book."

Once children discern that the teacher values reading, they are most anxious to let the teacher know that they *are* reading. In the role of "receiver of the good," the teacher listens, acknowledges, and rejoices in children's good experiences. A child holds up a book saying, "Look, I read 46 pages today." "Fantastic," says the teacher. Another records in his journal, "I read five books over the Thanksgiving vacation. All I did was read." The teacher writes back, "That's wonderful." A boy holds up Pinkwater's *Lizard Music* (1976), saying "Hey! This kid starts seeing lizards everywhere—on the TV, in the window, in the guy's sleeve," and the teacher laughs with him.

Teachers of young children spend a great deal of time behind the scenes, playing the role of community planner. In primary classrooms the teacher is an important recommender and provider. The teacher is really the only one who knows about books, who has access to books, and who has the power to make personal introductions, as in "John, I thought of you right away when I saw this one. You'll love it."

At any grade level, the teacher is also the person who functions to hold the group history in memory and to ask questions which allow children to range back over what they have read. By asking, for instance, "Are there any other folktales you know that have sets of three in them?" or "What other books do you know that Betsy Byars has written?" the teacher gives children a chance to see their reading as part of a wider literary framework. In addition, as titles are resurrected, new

readers may be drawn to a book they had forgotten about. By these questions, the teacher allows children's shared book knowledge to be renewed, reorganized, accommodated, and assimilated in the classroom.

In *Learning To Read*, Margaret Meek (1982) writes that "for all the reading research we have financed, we are certain only that good readers pick their own way to literacy in the company of friends who encourage and sustain them and that . . . the enthusiasm of a trusted adult can make the difference" (p. 193). We have suggested here, based on what we have seen, that the company is of special importance. Behind one child lost in a good book stands a community of other children and interested adults who help the reader choose, respond, and enjoy.

References

Applebee, Arthur N. *The child's concept of story: Ages two to seventeen.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Barnes, Douglas. *From communication to curriculum.* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1976.

Bruner, Jerome. The language of education. Lecture delivered at The Ohio State University, April 22, 1982.

Favat, F. Andre. *Child and tale: The origins of interest.* Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977.

Hepler, Susan I. *Patterns of response to literature: A one-year study of a fifth and sixth grade classroom.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1982.

Hickman, Janet G. *Response to literature in a school environment, grades K-5.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1979.

Meek, Margaret. *Learning to read.* London: The Bodley Head, 1982.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Schlager, Norma. Predicting children's choices in literature: A developmental approach. *Children's Literature in Education*, 1978, *9* (3), 136-142.

Children's Books

Aiken, Joan. *The wolves of Willoughby Chase.* New York: Doubleday, 1963.

Anno, Mitsumasa. *Anno's counting book.* New York: Crowell, 1977.

Anno, Mitsumasa. *Anno's journey.* New York: Philomel, 1978.

Blume, Judy. *Tales of a fourth grade nothing.* New York: Dutton, 1972.

Blume, Judy. *Superfudge.* New York: Dutton, 1980.

Byars, Betsy. *The pinballs.* New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Colby, C. B. *Fighting gear of World War II.* New York: Coward-McCann, 1961.

Dahl, Roald. *James and the giant peach.* Illustrated by Nancy Ekholm Burkert. New York: Knopf, 1961.

Fritz, Jean. *What's the big idea, Ben Franklin?* Illustrated by Margot Tomes. New York: Coward, McCann, 1976.

Goffstein, M. B. *An artist.* New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

Hunter, Mollie. *A stranger came ashore.* New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

Hutchins, Pat. *Rosie's walk.* New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Kent, Jack. *The fat cat.* New York: Parents', 1971.

Lionni, Leo. *Pezzettino.* New York: Pantheon, 1975.

Macaulay, David. *Pyramid.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.

Macaulay, David. *Unbuilding.* New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

McWhirter, Norris, and McWhirter, Ross. *The Guinness book of world records.* New York: Sterling, 1975.

Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia.* New York: Crowell, 1977.

Pevsner, Stella. *Keep stompin' till the music stops.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

Pinkwater, Daniel M. *Lizard music.* New York: Dodd, Mead, 1976.

Potter, Beatrix. *The tale of Peter Rabbit.* Warne, 1902.

Prelutsky, Jack. *Rolling Harvey down the hill.* Illustrated by Victoria Chess. New York: Greenwillow, 1980.

Rawls, Wilson. *Where the red fern grows.* New York: Doubleday, 1961.

Sachs, Marilyn. *Veronica Ganz.* New York: Doubleday, 1968.

Silverstein, Shel. *Where the sidewalk ends.* New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

Sleator, William. *The green futures of Tycho.* New York: Dutton, 1981.

tip

Margaret Meek

What Counts as Evidence in Theories of Children's Literature?

If we include all the speculative thinking that goes on about children's books, of the making of theories there is no end. Reassuringly, my Oxford dictionary says I can expect "systematic statements of general principles and laws," or, "in a loose and general sense" treat a theory as "a hypothesis proposed as an explanation." Having neither the time nor the wit to make laws, nor yet the zealous exactitude to be exclusively systematic, I never begrudge theoretical status to anything that helps us to understand how we come to understand the principles, the categories, the criteria for judgment that make up an interaction with all literature, not only children's.

I willingly concede that most writers, critics, or straightforward readers, are bound to be theorists. I may speak loosely, and say that John Newbery's motto, "Trade and Plumb Cake for Ever, Hurrah!" shows a theoretical understanding of the relationship of children's books to the prevailing economic and social facts related to their production and sale in the mid-18th century because I know that comparable understandings underpin the appearance of most children's books throughout their history. I long for Harvey Darton's (1932) perspicacity in announcing—in the first line of his great volume—that children's books are "works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure," for there is no clearer or better theory than that. It allowed Darton to discuss as "the theorists" the writers of moral tales, like Maria Edgeworth and Thomas Day, in the way that has informed and formed our thinking about children's books ever since. For all that their writings embody the child-centered educational philosophy of Rousseau, these authors are essentially, says Darton, good story tellers moved by "human realism," a characteristic clearly marked in Darton himself.

Whatever the topic to be studied, in literature, as elsewhere, we inherit the theories of our predecessors, willy nilly; and in making our own we are bound to represent not only their earlier methods of inquiry, but also the pattern of associated constructs already existent in our own minds. Thus, I cannot speculate about children's literature without incorporating the tissues of ideas that inform my everyday thinking about literature, children, reading, writing, language, linguistics, politics, ideology, sociology, history, education, sex, psychology, art, or a combination of some or all of these, to say nothing of joy or sadness, pleasure or pain. This is a lengthy way of saying that those who would theorize do so initially about themselves. There is a sense in which I can make a theory of children's literature only for myself and encourage you to do the same.

The first excuse for doing it publicly is to look collaboratively with you at some things which go unacknowledged simply because, as bookish people, we tend to take them for granted. The second is more serious: I believe we have come to the point where the existence of a literature whose *implied* readers are not adult (although its actual writers, producers, buyers, critics, and promoters undoubtedly are) expects of serious critics and stu-

Margaret Meek is senior lecturer in English at the Institute of Education, University of London.

dents a more systematically speculative poetics, in the Aristotelian sense of defining the thing made. Children's literature has an appreciable history and an expanding present. Look, if you will, at the size and scope of the volume called *Twentieth Century Children's Writers* (Kirkpatrick, 1978), which is about to be revised by the addition of more than 80 new authors, and ask if we might not profitably address ourselves to this matter, perhaps with more stringency than we have hitherto shown. It may be argued that our very hospitality to ideas in this field which, for all its rapid growth, is still quite young, has hindered a more systematic search for what counts as evidence of the nature of the thing we study with great zeal.

My simple beginning point is, things are changing, fast. In the past 20 years, we have outgrown the need to establish children's books as a legitimate area of study, but we are still looking through the lorgnettes of critical models now outworn in adult literature. We have had the fights of the "book people" (those who espouse what in England is called "Leavisite elitism" or, in the States, "new criticism," and look for "the good" as against "the best" to establish criteria of selection, so that "literature" can be separated from "reading matter") against the "children people" (those who support the needs of young readers and exploit the benefits of developmental psychology). Clearly, the "book people" do not ignore children as readers; they simply find them irrelevant to the judgments made about the books (Alderson, 1969). The "children people" certainly do not tolerate bad books for children; they prefer, however, to bring the readership into focus. We have done, as Stanley Fish (1980) explains, "what critics always do: we saw what our interpretative principles permitted or directed us to see, and then we turned around and attributed what we had 'seen' to a text and an intention" (p.12). We are only now coming to realize that we are an interpretative community of those who read books where the readership is part of their definition. The texts we choose gain the status of literature because we are responsible for defining what counts as evidence of their worth. But it is what counts as evidence that needs reevaluation. The books are slipping through our categories of genre, narrative stance and style, text and structure, ideology, and social relevance. The new readers are, quite simply, different. Two generations of television and the prospect of boundless technological resources have seen to that. If we agree that children's literature exists, we need to examine what makes it specially *children's* nowadays.

I propose therefore to offer you a very primitive kind of theory, a *viewing* or a *sight*, of these things that must be included in revised hypothetical descriptions of literature specially designated "children's." If I can do this, my argument will be that earlier considerations of children's books as either picture books and fairy stories, the printed forms of earlier oral traditions, or as lesser, smaller, easier-to-read, miniaturized forms of other literatures, can be turned around. Then, literature for children may be seen as the significant model, the cultural paradigm of subsequent literature in *the experience of the reader.* Children's literature is, undeniably, the *first* literary experience, where the reader's expectations of what literature *is* are laid down.[1] Books in childhood initiate children into literature; they inaugurate certain kinds of literary competences, in Culler's phrase (1975). They offer a view of what it is to be literate. As (in my case) aging, expert *literati* we take all this for granted and assume that our early experience has a generality that stretches beyond our generation. Thus we often neglect our obligation to find a way of talking about children's literature that matches their contemporary experience of it.

Let us begin, however, by agreeing that we have gained a great deal from the study of children's literature of the past, if only because scholars have established in this field standards of research as rigorous as any literature demands. Given the notoriously ephemeral nature of publications for the young, we must be grateful for the continuous sifting and ordering of texts, the bibliographical and publishing details which now allow us to match the books with their reading public. In studies of 19th century children's books, the literary historians have reaped bountiful harvests. Brian Alderson, the children's book columnist of the London *Times,* said wryly in a recent paper: "Opinions are free; facts are expensive," implying that the bibliographical exactitude demanded of someone involved, as he was, in re-editing Harvey Darton demanded more time and labor than the expressive forms of literary criticism. This is true, and I acknowledge our debt as I would for the solution of the editorial problems in Shakespeare.

But it is not only the antiquarian interest in these studies that makes them important. They also help us to understand how children's books are produced within and determined by their social and historical context. We can better appreciate, then

as now, how conditions of production and distribution influence what children can and do read. It is impossible to discuss books in a social vacuum. J. S. Bratton's (1981) study of Victorian children's fiction, the books that Darton despises, shows that what we accept as literature—*Alice* and *The King of the Golden River* (Ruskin, 1841) for instance—are finely wrought fastidious exceptions. They were not read at that time by the majority of literate children whose books were Sunday school prizes, moral tales for Christian propaganda and social control. The most prolific writers of these books were women who needed the money. By showing how their authors' intention was held in common, Bratton demonstrates that we can judge the skill of a writer like Hesba Stretton in interpreting and manipulating the given formula. Where once critics lumped these books together, she now exercises a more refined literary discrimination. This is only one example of how the awareness of the readers influences our judgment of the books. The presence of a literature judged to be "popular" tells us what the literate read. It also tells us what adults offer children to read, the kinds of texts they are expected to be able to cope with, and how these relate to what adults are reading. The significantly different texts, the exceptions, like *Alice*, are then all the more exceptional. We can derive from studies of Victorian children's books a theory of children's literature that includes children reading as authors taught them to. The advantage of so doing is that it helps us to do the same for our contemporary children's books.

The Culture of Childhood

Before we do that, we have to look again to the past for what we have too easily taken for granted in our own reading and development, namely, the culture of childhood. The untimely death of Peter Opie brought me to a re-reading of *The Lore and Language of School Children* (Opie and Opie, 1959) and a recollected awareness of two traditions, the adult-transmitted and approved nursery rhymes, pictures books, and fairy tales, and the oral tradition of the society of children. The first is reproduced in books as literature; the second goes underground and seems to lose itself in the business of growing up, to be outgrown. When we examine this formidable lore closely we discover it is never truly lost. For one thing, it doesn't die out, but recreates itself in each generation carrying forward the natural linguistic heritage of children, what the Opies call "a thriving unself-conscious culture which is unnoticed by the sophisticated world. Boys," they say, "continue to crack jokes that Swift collected from his friends in Queen Anne's time; they play tricks that lads used to play in the days of Beau Brummel; they ask riddles which were posed when Henry VIII was a boy. Young girls continue to perform a magic feat (levitation) of which Pepys heard tell . . . they hoard bus tickets and milk bottle tops in distant memory of a love-lorn girl held to ransom by a tyrannical father; they learn to cure warts (and are successful in curing them) after the manner that Francis Bacon learnt when he was young" (p.2),and so on. This is the oral literature of a primitive society; it is also the bedrock of both common sense—"If you make that face and the wind changes, it will stay like that"—*and* the expression of a subversive possibility—the story of a girl or boy to whom it happened.

My main concern is that this childhood culture has the *formal* characteristics of literature; and when it is learned, it is acquired holistically, as form and content, signifier and signified, metaphor and meaning. This is clear when we look at the origins of children's ability to tell and understand jokes. They tell jokes successfully before they understand them because they master the formula ("when is a door not a door? when it is ajar").[2] The formulae of childhood culture are varied yet unchanging, memorable, simple structures with manifold substitutions, like language itself. They rehearse a barter economy, set territorial bounds, teach counting. They express the basic cohesion of a group and explain the limits of authority. The passer-on becomes the author.[3] All this we know, but because it is obvious, we neglect not only its importance as symbolic truth, but also its basic importance as evidence of literary competences:

> Tell tale tit
> Your tongue shall be split
> And all the dogs in London
> Shall have a little bit.

As they recite and jeer, threaten, beg, count, and exercise word-calling as power against the dark, or as the formulation of forbidden impulses, children are doing many things they will meet later in acknowledged literary forms. As language breaks the boundaries of sense,

> The man in the wilderness said to me
> How many strawberries grow in the sea . . .

children learn to play with what they have now mastered—their mother tongue—and to make reality what it is, and what it is not. They lay the foundations of literature, the formal language which, in our day, is written text.

We admire this widespread oral culture, marvel at its transmission, and that is that.[4] A number of things go insufficiently remarked. One is the power of the feeling that lies behind children's chants and verses. Because they are small of stature and immature in thought, believing for a number of years that they may visit Cinderella (Applebee, 1978), we ignore the immensity of their emotions which are never less than adult-sized and sometimes ungovernable. The shape of the chant, its rhythm, and its form contain the emotion, thereby sublimating the overwhelming contents of childish consciousness to the form of art. Poems and verses become metaphors for feeling. The reciters "extend reality the better to test it" (Jones, 1968). Pain and anger, joy and excitement move from their raw state into the ritual and magic of formal utterance that is primitive literary competence. "Common sense," says Roy Shafer (1981), "is our storehouse of narrative structures."

This lore is embedded in play, the essential activity of children. It is their cultural memory, undistinguished as to means and ends, occurring, as Winnicott (1971) says, in the "third area" between the demands and pressures of inner and outer reality. It is the *shared text*—the *first* literature of an emergent social group that is exploring the boundaries of its common world, discovering reality, discovering forms of utterance that are not communicative speech trafficking in information sharing. It is robust, alive, dialogued, repeated, rule-governed, and therefore easily transmissible across countries and cultures. The most natural current manifestation of it is the TV jingle which has the same generality, even greater transmission potential, the same fading of detail and survival of form, the same sharing of common, known texts.

It is difficult for the highly literate to understand the importance of this culture because, as we know, it seems to disappear. In fact, we replace it with books and television where it hovers just below the surface. At the same time we don't explore how, and to what extent, we *share* text. Literary theorists take Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Blake, Dostoyevsky as common currency. Behind them stand the monumental classics of Greece and Rome and what Northrop Frye (1982) calls the "great code" of the Bible. When we read poems and novels, we often know what is going on in them because earlier in our lives, as children, we read the same books as the author. Now this is much less likely than it used to be. In 19th century books for both children and adults, Bible cadences and stories are echoed and alluded to. Authors counted on their being recognized. But in our day the Bible is no longer a shared text across the generations. Thus the source references in Graham Oakley's picture book for children, *The Church Mouse (1977)*, are reserved only for those adults who, when they read to children, have what Frank Kermode (1979) calls "circumsized ears"; and we are bound to admit that they are the few where once they were the many.

In our concern to speed children's progress to what we believe is their literary heritage, and in our making of theories of children's books, we gradually dismiss as insignificant everything that is not "literature" transmitted by adults. This is one of the historical consequences of living in a society where literacy is both prized and taken for granted. We believe that important *text* is prose or verse in *books*. We even disregard drama, and therefore fail to see the developmental connection between young people of 17 and 18 who flock to London's National Theatre to see the *Oresteia* and the 3 million children who, twice a week, watch a TV serial about a school called Grange Hill where comparable feuds occur. The fate of the house of Atreus is a familiar literary landmark—a great, lasting dramatic text. *Grange Hill* is drama, television text—a cultural artifact that dominates contemporary childhood.

Any significant theory of children's literature cannot ignore the texts children hold in common, for on these is their view of literature founded, and from these are their literary competences developed. My roots are not in television but in books. This is a historical accident. I share familiar literary landmarks with my generation. I have constantly to remind myself that the parents of children now in school grew up with TV. The style and narrative conventions adopted by modern writers for children develop less from earlier books than from the shared texts of television, where new codes are made and learned as universally as in the medieval art of stained glass.

The Primacy of Narrative

To make my next point I have to return to *The Cool Web* (Meek et al., 1977). When my colleagues and I put this book together, we were inviting read-

ers to make their own rationale for children's literature alongside ours. We wanted to make *narrative* central to the study of children learning to read and to the criticism of children's literature. We hoped children's authors would be granted their rightful place in the great tradition of story tellers, and critics would then look at how well-made stories teach children to read in ways that no basal reader could.

We anticipated things a little. Many reading teachers found the book, and the invitation to "theorize" which it extended, irrelevant to their classroom practice because it asks them to examine their behavior as readers instead of telling them what to do in reading lessons. But the central idea, that narrative is "a primary act of mind," and the emphasis on the fact that we live by the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, has now become the cosmology of literature, the present practice of adult literary theory. This is partly the result of extended interest in formalism and structuralism. It is also a prevalent idea because studies of language and literature have at last intertwined to examine "the problems of articulating a world" (Culler, 1975).

In examining narrative, literary critics are often the victims of their own bookishness, so that they ignore what could extend their awareness—picture books, for instance. (What have they made of Raymond Briggs's *When the Wind Blows*, 1982, as a commentary on a possible nuclear disaster?) In the same way, writers about children's books have ignored, on the whole, the new theoretical studies of narrative, the very thing that characterizes children's books so clearly.

My colleagues and I are studying what Harold Rosen (1982) calls "the nurture of narrative." Our concern is to show how storying, the central feature of the culture of childhood, is related—in all its ethnographic complexity, its sense of occasion, its rituals, its varieties of language and its awareness of linguistic registers, its cognitive power, its mythological world-making, and its celebratory strength—to the production and interpretation of that order of texts that we still want to call literature.

Narrative is primary in children, but it stays with us as a cognitive and affective habit all our lives long. As theorists and critics we have neglected what has always been there for us to explore. Thus narratology, the theoretical study of narrative, does not begin with the "natural" storytelling of childhood, but with Sterne, Dostoyevsky, Proust, the great novel tradition. Then, suddenly, Alan Garner in *The Stone Book Quartet* [5]—four short texts as lucid as the dawn—tells us about his great-grandfather, and his family. In the age-old disguise and magic of fiction he links the primary oral narrative with the subtlest "onioning" that Barthes could approve, and shows that the secrets of narrative, in all cultures and subcultures, lie with children making sense of their world. They learn their history, their *mythos*, from the places where they live or in the strangeness of exile, and they learn it from adults who take the time and the trouble to tell it to them in the way that suits the culture in which the storytelling is embedded. In the stories they hear, and later read, children inherit the verbal memory of their tribe in a way that contact with more complex narrations will never wholly erase. For most of my acquaintances *Macbeth* is a play by Shakespeare. For me it is a stern true story of retribution and penance played out against a familiar landscape on the coast of Fife where I was born, within walking distance of a ruin called Macduff Castle. From the stories we hear as children we inherit the feeling mode, the truth value, the codes, the rhetoric, the transmission techniques that tell us who we are. Ursula LeGuin (1981) says we tell tales "because we are so organized as to take actions that prevent our dissolution into the surroundings"; and Maurice Sendak reports that stories, such as Mickey Mouse tales, helped him "to get through the day."[6] Whatever else our theorizing does, it must not neglect such powerful statements of primary feelings.

Critics of children's literature are notoriously unlettered about the features of children's starting points when they relate storying, the natural cognitive habit, to Story, the art form developed from it. Elaine Moss (1981) has shown quite conclusively how poorly adult critics read picture books which are at once children's primary reading and subtle semiotic systems. A picture book invites all kinds of reading and allows the invention of a set of stories rather than a single story. Picture books alone, with their differing perspectives and points of view, the variety of artists' techniques and ways of teaching conventions of image and text, offer us a chance and the means to produce a whole poetics of literature that no one disputes is undoubtedly children's. I hope I may be forgiven by those who have devoted their lives to this field in order to educate me when I say I am amazed by how little I know, yet I still base a whole rationale for my view of the teaching of reading on the fox and the goat in *Rosie's Walk*.[7] There is scope now, I think, for a new *Cool Web*, a revised pattern of children's

reading, but I am, without any modesty, proposing that it should be spun off the central tenet of the first.

In moving toward new theories of children's literature, we may have to shift our emphases somewhat. Few critics will ever stop looking for "the best" of anything, but as one who spends a great deal of time escaping from the awarding of prizes, I know I lack the absolutism this demands. I am essentially collaborative rather than competitive in my intellectual life, agreeing as I do with Northrop Frye (1982) that evaluation is "a minor and subordinate function of the critical process, at best an incidental by-product, which should never be allowed to take priority over scholarship" (p. xvi). Too refined evaluation winds us down into smaller and smaller categories of what I still think of as marks for good conduct. Instead let me admire craftsmanship and honest making. I think I recognize these.

Then, for all that I want to include children as readers, I have to take a rest from *response;* or rather, I need to skirt round the word in order to go forward. There is no doubt that readers are moved by what they read and that the nature of this shifting inside oneself is the result of something in the text and one's set toward it. But behind the crude notion of response lies a psychological model to which I cannot subscribe, one that treats the tale or books as simply a stimulus. My belief is that reading is an interactive process, as Iser (1978) defines it. Studies of children's responses to literature usually seek to link what young readers say about the books they read to a theory or a model of cognitive or affective development, or to prove something about the "suitability" of a story or a theme for children of a given age. The adult asks questions about the story; the children "respond." Left to comment on their own, without the stimulus of a question, children often choose to talk about quite other aspects of a tale than those that preoccupy their elders. Here are four lines of transcript from the unsupervised conversation of six-year olds about *The Shrinking of Treehorn* (Heide, 1975).[8]

Brett: I don't really like shrinking. I want to grow up, not shrink.
Carolyn: How do you think it would feel, to shrink?
Ian: Frightening.
Nathan: (the smallest boy) People would say: "Out the way, titch."

The first three children are speculating: the fourth is producing his experience for the group. Together they are assimilating "virtual experience" in Susanne Langer's (1953, p. 212) terms. They are discussing language and possibilities. (Humans get larger; can they get smaller?) They create a tissue of collaborative understandings for each other in a way that no single question from an adult makes possible.

We still do not know how they take on the author's view of Treehorn. Are they amused or afraid? What ways of telling are they noticing? How are they learning to read a funny story? We have so taken the conventions of story telling for children for granted that we have forgotten how a book like *The Shrinking of Treehorn* not only amuses its readers, but also teaches them how a funny story *is to be read.* In that children's literature gives its readers their earliest experience of literature, it also teaches them the reading lessons they need in order to become readers of this literature.

Thus, when authors choose to write for children, there is every chance that they may be intrigued by the prospect of creating literary artifacts for *new* readers, to whom they can teach how their story is to be read. The author can experiment, because the reader's expectations are based not on literary experience, but on a prospective reading adventure with the possibility of surprise. In this sense, that is, that they experiment on behalf of new readers, authors of children's books who are genuinely exploring the relationship of form and content can say that they write for themselves. The problem facing adult critics is that they know only too well what most storytellers are up to. They are no longer anticipating either adventure or surprise.

What we need is an analysis of narrative discourse which does not say that children's stories are simpler forms of adult telling, but insists that they are the primary kinds and structures of later tellings. The authors whose work in children's literature we admire, poise adjectives, calculate sentence length, leave gaps in texts, choose metaphors, all with poetic discipline. They counterpoint tense and time, reading time and virtual memory.

Simple scrutiny shows how closely contemporary writing for children is linked to the narratives being seen on television. Authors no longer tag their dialogue with "he said" or "murmured Monica." The first chapter of a children's story plunges the reader headlong into the action; explanations wait until the second chapter, when the reader is hooked into what is happening--a good TV device.

We are still no nearer understanding exactly *how* a children's book creates the "illusion of a world" that evokes the literary belief that Tolkien speaks of, but Frank Smith suggests that this is the whole basis of understanding.[9] Susanne Langer (1953) saw that in children's stories lay the paradigm of the adult novel. She says of Kipling's *Jungle Book:*

> These juvenile stories are the most skilful poetic creations. I have cited them because their magic is fairly *easy to analyse* and the analysis reveals what may, in fact, be found in any well told story—that the whole fabric of illusory events takes it appearance from the way the statements which actually compose the story are worded, the way the sentences flow, stop, repeat, stand alone etc., the concentrations and expansions of statement, the changed or denuded words. The ways of telling make the place, the action, the characters in fiction (pp. 297-298).

"Fairly easy to analyse. . . ." I wonder why we haven't tried harder to do it. Susanne Langer says the secret is in the voice on the page, when Kipling says, "O best beloved"—a textual device for inviting young readers into the tale so that they become both the teller and the told. How little we attend to the voice of the narrator in assessing books for children. We have been too preoccupied with the cult of the author. Is it not surprising how scantily we have studied the narrative discourse of children's literature outside the fairy tale? Or when we do it, are we not still caught in the traps of old critical practice—the diversification of the descriptive adjective—so that we applaud as the best critic not the one who comes closest to the text in order to offer us a poetics of its structure, but the one with the best dictionary or thesaurus, or the most winsome style. If we were really serious about a theory of children's literature, we should have analyzed the conventions and figures of texts and how these change as children change.

Perhaps, for all our care, we have been underreading children's books, especially the most recent ones. We have enjoyed them, promoted them, been glad when they were "relevant" to the lives of modern children. But we may not have been the best masters of a literature that has the culture of childhood as part of its definition and the reader's experience of it as something to explore. We have no Propp, no Saussure of children's reading, Barthes (1976) says; nor have we a Genette (1980) to analyze the discourse that makes children's literature what it is. We have not yet described how an author organizes a text that teaches an inexperienced reader how to read it. Literature, not reading lessons, teaches children to read in ways that no basal reader can, because literature is read, if at all, with passion, with desire.

New Questions Needed

We need to ask new questions. Are all readings of a story as idiosyncratic as adults claim? *How* do some children become insiders, walking around inside a story so that they tell their own alongside the author's, as Iser (1978) suggests. Good readers, we say, read fast. What do "over-readers," the slow ones, notice that we, the experienced, miss? How do readers, experienced or inexperienced, know what kind of story they are handling, what kind of invitation they are accepting, when they begin to read? Iser says: "Fictional language provides instructions for the building of a situation and so for the production of an imaginary object." How do readers obey these instructions? Will you believe me if I tell you that these competences are generally learned by children when they first read books that are undoubtedly not "the best"? Louise Rosenblatt (1978) forcibly reminds us that "the social and intellectual atmosphere that sets up 'good literature' as almost by definition works accessible only to the elitist critic or literary historian leads the average reader to assume that he is not capable of participating in them" (p. 142).

How, I wonder, do you respond to my suggestion that we have neglected *potential* readers for too long? We have often despised what they choose because we can't bear its banality. In so doing, we have not really seen the inexperienced reader building an imaginary object, and so we don't know what the next step for any one child is on the road to Jane Austen and Dostoyevsky because we haven't looked closely enough at the ways successful authors—whether we like them or not—code their reading instructions for the young. In children's reading, in children's literature, we can become aware of the conventions, the repertoires, and demonstrate how they are learned and developed as literary competences. That, in my view, would make a poetics of children's literature and children's reading. It has to be an interdisciplinary study, whereby the expert readers and the reading experts meet and enthuse each other.

We have left a great deal of neglected evidence lying around. Parents who read the same book regularly to their children know that only the "good" ones stand up to repetition. Exactly why? The answer must lie surely in the relationship of the language to the meaning. If by literature we mean something of value, says Peter Hunt (1982), then "the more basic the motivation touched or conjured up by a text, the more valuable that text seems to us." His work on the relationship of *quality* and *value* in children's books seems to me an important new beginning in literary theory.

Then, we have made very little use of children's own stories beyond Arthur Applebee's assimilation of them to Piaget's and Vygotsky's studies in cognitive development. Donald Graves is looking at how reading affects narrative models in children's writing. This is one aspect of the more detailed studies we need of the development of literary competences, the mastery of language systems and conventions in texts. As I exhaustingly showed at the start, children are competent over a wide range of these in oral literature. Which ones do children's authors count on? How do authors confirm and extend the literary competences of young readers as Joyce, Beckett, and Italo Calvino persistently extend mine? To make sense of a book is to know how to read it. "Literature," says Genette (1980), "like any other activity of the mind, is based on conventions of which, with some exceptions, it is not aware" (p. 214). In which texts, at what age, are these conventions learned? They are rarely taught in reading lessons.

I am passionate about this need for collaborative activity because I know what concentration on the bookish child (ourselves when young) has done to children's reading. It has made children's books an insider's preoccupation. *Having read,* or knowing about, the best books has become a competitive game rather than a universal pleasure, a game that the publishers play too, so we characterize readers by what we think is suitable for them, instead of seeing how they would read if we really invited them into our world.

Finally, it is well known that every good reader has at some time been entranced by a thoroughly bad book with a strong, overarching narrative drive. Why has that never counted in theorizing? We have no convincing description of this common experience as a characteristic of writing, perhaps because we might have to exemplify it in Enid Blyton, a notoriously neglected source of evidence. Our discriminations of how the surface structures of language in children's books are linked to the natural narratives of childhood culture are in their infancy. We have no good study of children's humorous books, for example. We haven't looked for evidence readers could give us about the link between the deep feelings of childhood and their encoding in texts. The play of the text between reader and writer, in William Mayne,[10] for example, hasn't engaged us, yet Jonathan Culler (1975) says of adult literature that "a theory of literature is a theory of reading" (p. 259). Imagine critics of children's books being able to say what authors teach children about reading, how they learn the nature of the pause in Philippa Pearce, or which sentences in Madeleine L'Engle throw the switch that moves them "in" to the story. Why do we hold back from such engagements?

As I said at the start, storying, narrative, is now at the heart of adult literary criticism. In books for children are all the features of the starting point for readers, writers, and critics to examine *how* a theory of literature may be a theory of reading. We have to begin again to look at the interaction of text and reader. We may first have to teach each other *how* to look, to give up old critical habits and cliches and to put new elements of what we genuinely know about children and reading into a new theoretical pattern or hypothetical description. Whatever comes out, let nothing we do stand between reader and author, for we are parasitic middlemen, when all is said and done. As usual, the poet makes less fuss and creates the image of what we seek:

> The house was quiet and the world was calm.
> The reader became the book; and summer night
> Was like the conscious being of the book.
> The house was quiet and the world was calm.
> The words were spoken as if there was no book,
> Except that the reader leaned above the page.
> (Stevens, 1964).

Notes

1. Part of my evidence for this comes from children who have not successfully learned to read. If their earliest experience of learning at school imprints the idea that reading is hard work, they do not easily progress to the belief that it can be voluntarily engaged in for pleasure.
2. My doctoral student, Aileen Beckman of Philadelphia, has demonstrated just how uncharted are the ways of children's development in all kinds of humor.
3. For this idea I am indebted to Alison Lurie.

4. Clearly, this is not absolutely so. Ethnographic studies, such as those of Shirley Brice Heath of Stamford, have explored these sources in anthropological contexts.
5. The Stone Book Quartet by Alan Garner consists of: *The Stone Book* (1976), *Granny Reardun* (1977), *The Aimer Gate* (1978), *Tom Fobble's Day* (1977). London: Collins. The order given here is the chronological order of the stories.
6. Maurice Sendak in BBC television interview May, 1982.
7. Pat Hutchins. *Rosie's Walk*. London: The Bodley Head, 1968. In this story Rosie, the hen, goes for a walk around the farmyard and is pursued by a fox. The fox is not mentioned in the text. The size of the goat in the picture indicates that progress. Young readers learn quickly the bond with the author that lets them share perceptions and spectator role judgments that are nowhere expressed in words.
8. I owe this example to Pat D'Arcy and her colleagues working with children in Wiltshire.
9. Frank Smith (1982), A metaphor for literacy: Creating worlds or shunting information, a paper kindly sent to me by the author.
10. William Mayne is a noted English author for children whose books have always been challenging in textual terms.

References

Alderson, Brian. The irrelevance of children to the study of children's literature. *Children's Book News*, January 1969, *4* (1).

Applebee, Arthur. *The child's concept of story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Barthes, Roland. *Sur la lecture* in Le francais aujourd'hui; revue de l'Association Francais des Enseignants de Francais. Paris, January 1976.

Bratton, J. S. *The impact of Victorian children's fiction*. London: Croom Helm, 1981.

Briggs, Raymond. *When the wind blows*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982.

Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist poetics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

Darton, F. J. Harvey. *Children's books in England*. (Third Ed. revised by Brian Alderson.) Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982. (First published in 1932).

Fish, Stanley. *Is there a text in this class?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Frye, Northrop. *The great code: The Bible and literature*. London: The Tavistock Press, 1982.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative discourse*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.

Heide, Florence Parry. *The shrinking of Treehorn*. London: Kestrel Books, 1975. (Originally published in U. S. A.)

Hunt, Peter. *A theory of children's literature*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Cardiff, Wales, 1982.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The act of reading*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

Jones, Richard. *Fantasy and feeling in education*. New York: New York University Press, 1968.

Kermode, Frank. *The genesis of secrecy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. *Twentieth century children's writers*. London: Macmillan, 1978.

Langer, Susanne. *Feeling and form*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953. (Originally published in U. S. A.)

LeGuin, Ursula. It was a dark and stormy night. In W.J.T. Mitchell (Ed.), *On narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1981.

Meek, Margaret, Barton, Griselda, and Warlow, Aidan. *The cool web: The pattern of children's reading*. London: The Bodley Head, 1977.

Moss, Elaine. *Picture books for children 9-15*. Stroud, Gloucester, England: The Thimble Press, 1981.

Oakley, Graham. *The church mouse*. London: Macmillan, 1977.

Opie, Iona, and Opie, Peter. *The lore and language of school children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Rosen, Harold. The nurture of narrative. In the proceedings of the I.R.A. Conference, Chicago, 1982.

Rosenblatt, Louise. *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Ruskin, John. *The king of the golden river*. East Aurora, N.Y.: Roycrofter, 1841.

Shafer, Roy. Narration in the psychoanalytic dialogue. In W.J.T. Mitchell (Ed.), *On narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Stevens, Wallace. *Collected poems*. New York: Knopf, 1964. (Quoted in Rosenblatt, 1978.)

Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and reality*. London: The Tavistock Press, 1971.

tip

Don Holdaway

Shared Book Experience: Teaching Reading Using Favorite Books

Most children would agree that listening to stories is a most enjoyable activity, especially during the early years of schooling. Most teachers do read to their children and they, too, enjoy the experience. By contrast, the *instructional* reading program, however, does not seem to be characterized by anything like the same level of enjoyment for either children or teacher—it is often a time of boredom or stress and the ritualistic performance of unmotivating activities. Story time and reading time have different purposes, different content, and different rewards. They are so different that one must ask, "which best embodies literacy?"

As teachers, we tend to take the differences between these two situations for granted: story time is for pleasure and nothing — least of all word-solving — should be allowed to break the spell; reading time is for learning to read and is a necessarily difficult and painful activity for many children, requiring hard work and application — no spellbinding here. For the work of learning to read we attempt to motivate the children artificially and reward them extrinsically, neglecting the deep satisfactions which spring naturally from a proper engagement with books of high quality. We accept the structured materials provided for instruction without questioning their lack of intrinsic interest or worth.

Most surprisingly for an intellectually oriented institution like the school, we assume that problem solving—represented in reading by such "skills" as word-attack and in written language by such skills as spelling and calligraphy — cannot possibly be a rich source of pleasure. In contrast, we know by simple observation that the stumbling approximations of infants as they attempt to solve the problems of walking or talking *do*, in fact, provide them with immense pleasure, but we are so myopic in our observation of reading behavior that we fail to register the intense joy which may be experienced by children in solving the most basic problems of literacy. Before long the reading program has so completely excluded such forms of joy that they are no longer there to observe. To turn a topical Australian phrase, literacy, inasmuch as it has anything to do with life, wasn't meant to be easy.

Children who are already reading and writing when they enter school at 5, or who are so ready to learn that they take literacy in their stride, have had a rather different introduction to the real processes of literacy. Some of their deepest satisfactions for several years have centered around their fumbling but excited attempts to read, write, and spell. Almost invariably they are familiar with a wide range of favorite books which, to use one of Bill Martin's delightful phrases, they can "zoom through with joyous familiarity" (1972).

These are the books they loved so much that they pestered people to read to them again and again. These are the books which they played at reading to themselves, puzzled and pored over with aggressive curiosity about the devices of print. In this naturally joyful activity they learned rapidly about

Don Holdaway is visiting professor of English and modern languages at The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, and educational consultant for Scholastic International Educational Publishers.

the mysterious relationships between fascinating language and pages of print. Their learning from these loved books was self-selected, intrinsically rewarded, and highly individualized.

Although story time in primary classes tends to be as enjoyable as it is in the book-loving home, it is not so effective in producing this "favorite book syndrome," and this is so for a number of reasons. There is not the same opportunity for personal selection. The teacher is not so free to respond to clamoring requests to "read-it-again." There is seldom the opportunity for all the children to handle the books independently as they become favorites. Because of visual and tactile distance from the text, there is not the same tendency for children to become curious about print at the crucial moments when they are reveling in the sounds of the language, nor is there the opportunity for them to point with their little fingers to details in the text and ask pointed questions. However, despite these losses in providing some of the crucial conditions to turn enjoyed books into favorite books, story time is still a powerhouse of natural motivation. Sadly, its output is largely wasted as a reinforcement for healthy reading behavior.

The Advent of Shared Book Experience Procedures

About 15 years ago a group of teachers and academics in Auckland, New Zealand, began to take this natural literacy-learning situation very seriously. They were stimulated by a new challenge presented by a rapidly growing migrant movement of Polynesian people from the Pacific islands and Maori people from rural districts into inner city schools. They were supported by a particularly lively climate of research and educational enthusiasm which was articulated throughout the system from department officers to practicing teachers, from university personnel to student teachers. They began cooperating and experimenting in new ways while maintaining healthy patterns of both criticism and support. The teaching procedures which began to develop and to be clarified in the ensuing years came to be known as "shared book experience." These procedures were integrated with already well-developed techniques in language experience approaches forming a complementary body of insights and techniques rather than a new methodology.

We were concerned to transform the educational context of the school in such a way as to achieve two goals.

a. To make available the most efficient learning environment possible in which to achieve literacy readiness for 5 year olds who did not come from literacy oriented backgrounds, and without segregating them from those who did.
b. To make entry into literacy a more natural and successful process in which children of widely differing backgrounds could make optimum progress without developing a sense of failure in the first years of schooling.

The prevailing model for literacy-learning was failing to provide a satisfactory structure for a large proportion of children, especially those from cultural backgrounds widely different from the culture of the school. We wished to avoid those aspects of traditional approaches which highlighted invidious comparisons among children, such as lockstep movement through a series of readers. We were looking for procedures to develop competence in written English, without forcing children to regard their own spoken dialects as wrong or inferior. We were, as well, looking for procedures which teachers could readily use and understand.

Our studies indicated that under suitable motivation and in a favorable learning environment children would master literacy skills in a way very similar to that in which they master other developmental tasks, especially those of spoken language. The adults involved in providing the conditions for such natural learning do so without expert, academic knowledge, with justifiable optimism and with evident personal reward. It might, after all, be possible to approach these ambitious goals we set for ourselves.

A Development Expedition

The magnificently successful processes of learning spoken language in infancy provided the central model for the project and in an important sense provided justification for many thinly researched conclusions. What follows should be understood as implying that the spoken language learning model has been taken very seriously, and we know of no evidence that it is improperly applied to literacy learning.

One of the features of early research and development in this project was a determined attempt to study and understand the learning background which produces children who become high-progress readers in their first year at school. As with the spoken language model, this study leads us into a

fascinating field of natural, developmental, pre-school learning. It is remarkable how little was really known 10 years ago about the conditions which produced our literacy-oriented children. Everyone agreed that it was a "good thing" to read to young children, and joked tolerantly about their tiresome demands to hear their favorite stories read again and again, but that's about as far as it went. Everyone talked about pre-reading skills and programs without reference to the learning situations which actually produced the most literacy-ready children at school entry. A more systematic study of pre-school literacy activities soon highlighted some surprising features.

First, book-handling activities began at a very early stage, expanding the child's exposure to special forms of language and special types of language process long before the tasks of spoken language were mastered. These children began experimenting with book language in its primary, oral form while they were still using baby grammar and struggling with the phonology of speech. Yet it seemed an ideal time for this exposure and experiment. The sooner book-oriented activities began, the more likely it was that book-handling and experimental writing would become an important part of the daily preoccupations of the infant. Literacy orientation does not wait upon accomplished spoken language.

Second, the literature made available by ordinary, sensible parents to their children, even before the age of 2 years, was remarkably rich in comparison to "readers" used in the first year of school. They often included highly structured or patterned language of a repetitive, cumulative, or cyclic kind. Although the adults always seemed willing to attempt to explain new vocabulary, meanings, and idioms, the stories usually carried growing understanding from their central human concerns, and the adults were seldom worried about making certain their children understood every last word, or that they had had direct sensory experience of every new concept. Just as speech develops in an environment which is immensely more rich than the immediate needs of the learner, so the orientation to book language develops in an environment of rich exposure beyond the immediate needs of the learner. In both situations, the learner selects appropriate items from the range.

Third, by determining *which* books they will have repeated experience of, children are involved in selection of those book experiences which will deeply preoccupy them from the earliest stages. The request to "read it again" arises as a natural developmental demand of high significance and an integral part of book exposure. Furthermore, in the behavior described in ensuing paragraphs, children quickly avail themselves of the opportunity to practice and experiment with a selection from the material made available to them. As in the mastery of other developmental tasks, self-selection rather than adult direction characterizes the specific and intensive preoccupations of early literacy orientation.

Role Playing as Reader—A Neglected Feature of Literacy Learning

By far the most interesting and surprising aspect of pre-school book experience is the independent activity of these very young children with their favorite books. Almost as soon as the child begins to be familiarized with particular books by repetitive experience, self-motivated, reading-like behavior begins. Attracted by the familiar object, the child picks it up, opens it, and begins attempting to retrieve for himself some of the language and its intonations. Quite early this reading-like play becomes story-complete, page-matched, and picture-stimulated. The story tends to be reexperienced as complete semantic units transcending sentence limits.

The time spent each day in these spontaneous attempts to retrieve the pleasurable experiences of favorite books is often greatly in excess of the time spent in listening to books being read by the adult(s) being emulated. The child attends for surprisingly long periods of time until the experience has achieved a semantic completeness, and the process may be repeated immediately with the same or another book.

A superficial assumption about this reading-like behavior would be that it was a form of rote learning based on repetitive patterning without deep comprehension or emotional response; that it would produce attempts at mere surface verbal recall. However, detailed study of this behavior through the analysis of tape recordings did not bear this out. On the contrary, what was displayed was a deep understanding of and response to central story meanings. The younger the child, and the less verbally competent, the greater was likely to be the distance from the surface verbal features of the text. The responses often involved what could only be called translation into forms of the language more typical of the child's current stage of linguistic development.

Here are two brief examples of this behavior at different levels of development:

Damion, age 2.0 years, retrieving *Are You My Mother* by P. D. Eastman:

	Text	Responses
4	The egg jumped. "Oh, oh!" said the mother bird. "My baby will be here! He will want to eat."	Ow ow! A mummy bird baby here. Someping a eat ("a" used throughout to replace "to" and "for").
6	"I must get something for my baby to eat!" she said. "I will be back." So away she went.	Must baby bird a (i.e. "to") eated Dat way went. Fly a gye.
8	The egg jumped. It jumped and jumped! Out came the baby bird.	Ig jumped and jumped! Out baby bird!
10	"Where is my mother?" he said. He looked for her.	Whis my mudder? She look a her and look her.
12	He looked up. He did not see her. He looked down. He did not see her.	Her look up, look down. See her. (Damion cannot yet form a negative so he uses the affirmative in all such cases, adding a special intonation and a *shake of the head!*)

Far from producing the text in parrot-like fashion, Damion is guided by deep meanings to perform brilliant translations of meaning into baby grammar, displaying what have come to be known as "pivot structures."

Lisa-Jane, 4.0 years, from the same book:

34	The kitten and the hen were not his mother. The dog and the cow were not his mother. Did he have a mother?	So the pussy wasn't his mother. The hen wasn't his mother. The dog wasn't his mother. The cow wasn't his mother. And the baby bird said, "Did I have a mother?" and he DID!
36	"I did have a mother," said the baby bird. "I know I did. I have to find her. I will. I WILL!"	What a sad face. That one says: Did he have a mother? Did he have a mother? HE DID!

Note how on page 34 reported speech is transposed into direct speech and the converse is carried out on page 36. Note also that the side comment, "That one says," is an indication that Lisa-Jane knows the story comes from the print. She also has perfect control of the registers of both conversation and book language, and can change readily from one to the other.

The remarkable thing about the developmental difference between the 2 and the 4 year old is not that it is different in kind, but that it is different in the degree of syntactic sophistication—an expression of the level of syntactic control available in deep processing. Both children start from whole-story understanding and retrieve in sentence units encoded into an appropriate syntax at the level of their spoken language development. Neither has memorized the vocabulary or the grammar word for word—they have memorized the meaning.

Approximation is a ruling principle, just as it is in learning spoken language. It should not come as a surprise—but to many it does—that these two learning situations in developmental behavior display classical reinforcement theory more clearly than any but highly contrived situations in school. Here is perfect exemplification of immediate reinforcement for every approximation in the right direction which learning theory recommends to us so strongly. Far from it being the case that developmental or "play" learning is something inferior to organized learning which sets up rigorous and efficient contingencies, developmental learning, in its almost flawless control of learning contingencies, puts the classroom to shame. We should not be saying that developmental learning is a hit-and-miss affair, lacking the efficient guidance and control provided in the school environment. It is *so* efficient and delicately controlled that we should, as teachers, be approximating towards that right learning structure. Yet we allow almost no place for approximation in learning to read, write, or spell.

Another noteworthy feature of this reading-like behavior is that it lacks an audience and is therefore self-regulated, self-corrected, and self-sustained. The child engages in this behavior without being directed to do so, at just those times when the loved adult is *not* available to do the reading. The child is not self-conscious or over-awed by the need to please an adult, nor is the child dependent on the adult for help or correction. Clay (1972) has shown how important the self-corrective strategy is to success in the early stages of reading.

To summarize, the bedtime story situation should not be separated from the independent out-

put behavior which it generates. Such behavior normally engages the infant in extensive, self-monitored, linguistic behavior for longer periods of time than are spent in the input activity of listening. The input and the output activities are complementary aspects of the same language-learning cycle. In both aspects there is close visual and tactile contact with the book, becoming increasingly oriented to print detail. All of the most powerful strategies of mature reading are being established and practiced in the reading-like, output behavior. The complexity and sophistication of the processes being mastered make the normal corpus of pre-reading skills look quite ridiculous.

There is obviously a great deal of positive reinforcement provided by both the input and output activities. In the first is the pleasure and delight of listening to the familiar human voice, full of warm intonation and bringing meaning to the special language where it differs from conversational language. The situation is socially rewarding, giving pleasure to both the adult and the child. It is a secure situation associated with proximity to or bodily contact with the adult.

The output activity is equally rewarding. Success in recreating the story is rewarded in a continuous, cyclic fashion similar to the rewards of experimenting with speech, and therefore tends to be self-sustaining. It is a situation which recalls the secure, pleasurable presence of the loved adult, and provides recall of the explanatory comments and answers to questions in the input sessions. The experience builds confidence in the ability to control language without outside help and, by the absence of criticism or correction, encourages self-regulation of complex language tasks.

In this situation, we have a further model for literacy-learning consistent in every way with the model derived from learning spoken language. Furthermore, it is the actual model demonstrated in the learning of those children who become our high progress readers or who teach themselves to read before entering school. In the model, the adult does not give instructions which the learner then attempts to carry out: rather, the adult provides real experience of the skill in joyful use. The skill then becomes a central feature of the learner's natural play and natural striving.

The early stages in the development of any complex human skill is activity which is *like* that skill and approximates progressively toward an activity which incorporates real processes and operations in mature use of the skill. Appropriate processes and strategies provide the foundation for successful practice and refinement — practice and refinement do *not* lead to the mature processes and strategies.

For literacy these strategies include:

- A deep, meaning-centered drive.
- Predictive alertness which harnesses background abilities such as syntactic responsiveness, semantic purposefulness, and experiential meaningfulness.
- Confirmatory and corrective self-monitoring by which output is constantly compared with sound models in prior experiences.
- Self-regulating and self-corrective operations leading to reinforcement patterns which are largely intrinsic and maintain high levels of task attention without extrinsic intervention.
- Risk-taking by approximation and trial backed by these sound strategies of self-monitoring.

(More detailed examples and implications are given in Holdaway, 1979.)

Application to Classroom Teaching

This model of natural, developmental learning in language could provide a powerful framework for a literacy program if the application to classroom conditions could be worked through. Such a program would be meaning-centered and process-centered rather than word-centered. It would be based on books from a wide literature which had become favorites for the children through enjoyable aural-oral experience. It would promote readiness in powerful ways associated with books and print, and would allow for a gradual transition from reading-like behavior to reading behavior. Approximation would be rewarded, thus supporting the early development of predictive and self-corrective strategies governed by meaning, which are crucial to healthy language use.

All of these factors seemed to be pointing in quite different directions from current methods, although they shared many features with language-experience approaches. We decided to take the model seriously and, at least for the purposes of exploration, see if it were possible to build a literacy program in which these principles were given genuine priority.

A growing body of psycholinguistic and developmental research seemed to be pointing in similar directions but a classroom methodology had not been worked out (e.g. Goodman, 1968). Early work

in individualized reading, led by Jeanette Veatch (1959), had broken much of the ground and provided valuable practical pointers, but teachers had been wary of this movement. In our own country, the work of Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963) among rural Maori children had provided a useful debate and a persuasively documented account of classroom procedures consistent with many of the principles we were seeking to embody. In the United States, Bill Martin had begun to publish the materials which led to the Holt Rinehart *Sounds of Language* series, and we were certainly on the same wavelength. We gained much from a study of all of these movements.

What was missing from this rich body of knowledge about developmental teaching was some set of procedures whereby all the important aspects of the bedtime story cycle could be replicated in the classroom. How was it possible to provide the same impact, the same level of participation, the same security and joy, the same prominence of print when there were 30 children rather than one? As so often happens, however, once the priorities had been set up, practical applications fell into place quite simply.

Three requirements needed to be met in order to achieve comparable or stronger impact than is achieved in the ideal pre-school, home setting. First, the books to be used in the reading program needed to be those that had proved themselves as loved by children. In this respect we, as teachers, had many advantages over parents both in determining which books children enjoy most and in obtaining them. We soon had some 200 titles, largely from the open literature rather than from reading schemes, known to be loved by 5 to 7 year olds.

Second, the books needed to have comparable visual impact from 20 feet as a normal book would have on the knee of a child. This requirement was met by using enlarged texts. We made "blown-up" books about 30 inches by 24 inches—mainly from heavy brown paper. Every child in a class group could see the print very clearly without needing to strain and press forward. Other devices such as charts, overhead transparencies, and projected slides were also used. Here again we found advantages over the home situation in that pointing and identifying details in an enlarged text suited the undeveloped muscular coordination of beginners.

Third, the teacher needed to present new material with wholehearted enjoyment, rather more as a performance than would be the case with most parents. The professional training of teachers normally ensures that this is a task they can carry out with skill and conviction.

Achieving the same level of participation as may occur in the one-to-one setting proved more difficult because only one question or comment could be fielded at a time. However, there were social compensations which far outweighed this limitation. Provided the children could engage in unison responses where it was natural and appropriate, we found that all the ancient satisfactions of chant and song were made available to sustain the feeling of involvement. Indeed, by using favorite poems, jingles, chants, and songs as basic reading material—that is, in the enlarged print format—another naturally satisfying part of normal school experience could be turned directly to literacy learning.

Security and joy developed naturally for both children and teacher. Favorite books soon carried with them all the secure associations of an old friend; children began going to books to *achieve* security. Because of the high impact of the books, and the teacher's pleasure-sharing role, joy was a common experience for all the children.

As for the teachers themselves, because they were doing something at the center of their competence rather than attempting to follow a half-understood methodology, they, too, experienced security and joy. They were able to develop their skill in using the natural opportunities for teaching gradually from a confident base—if attention were lost or a teaching point fell flat, they simply stepped back into the story, got it moving again, and recaptured the interest of the children.

Furthermore, they were able to engage in the input, reading activity with the whole class or a large group without a sense of guilt. (Try reading a captivating story to one group while the others carry out group tasks within earshot!) The problem of matching children to appropriate materials, or of keeping a group going at the same pace so as not to end up with nine or ten groups, almost disappeared. It was now the responsibility of each learner to select the materials he or she would "work on." Even though the teachers were using a new methodology with unusual priorities, their sense of relief from the pressures of structured programs and their enjoyment of the language period grew rapidly.

Once the decision had been made to put other priorities aside in an attempt to establish this model as the central framework of the reading program, the practical application proved a remarkably simple

matter. The task now was to refine the procedures in the light of professional knowledge from many sources in order to get optimal educational returns from the simple learning structure which had been set up.

A typical teaching-learning sequence of shared book experience in many classrooms developed along the following lines:

Opening warm-up	Favorite poems, jingles, songs, with enlarged text. Teaching of new poem or song.
Old favorite	Enjoyment of a favorite story in enlarged format. Teaching of skills in context. Deepening understanding. Unison participation. Role playing, dramatization.
Language games, especially alphabet	Alphabet games, rhymes, and songs, using letter names. Fun with words and sounds, meaningful situations. (Not isolated phonic drills.)
New story	Highlight of session. Long story may be broken naturally into two or more parts. Inducing word-solving strategies in context, participation in prediction and confirmation of new vocabulary.
Output activities	Independent reading from wide selection of favorites. Related arts activities stemming from new story. Creative writing often using structures from new story. Playing teacher—several children enjoy favorite together—one acting as teacher.

Development of shared book experience techniques went on for several years in key schools. Because the procedures tended to be communicated through demonstration and discussion, documentation was regrettably limited during this time. As a result of local and national in-service courses, and observation by hundreds of teachers and students in these key schools, the ideas spread rapidly. They tended to be used to supplement current procedures, and many mixed styles of teaching arose.

In 1973, convinced that the ideas deserved careful trial, the Department of Education nominated a large experimental school in a new housing area for the trial of these and other approaches. It was important to determine that shared book experience procedures could lead to effective literacy without the support of other programs or materials, and so one class of 35 beginners was taught for two years by these procedures alone. No graded or structured materials were used and all word-solving skills were taught in context during real reading. This experimental group proved equal or superior to other experimental and control groups on a variety of measures including Marie Clay's *Diagnostic Survey* (1980). Of greatest significance was the highly positive attitudes toward reading displayed by the slow-developing children after two years in the natural, shared book experience environment.

Following this study, the Department of Education embarked on an ambitious, national in-service program for primary teachers which was known as the "Early Reading In-service Course," and a complementary program for parents in both radio and print media (Horton, 1978). The radical movement of early schooling toward developmental models has been accomplished on a national scale, albeit the scale of a small nation.

Much has been done internationally since then, and more remains to be done. From our own symposium Yetta Goodman (1980), Margaret Meek (1982), and Dorothy Butler (1979 and 1980) have contributed to that growing movement in literacy toward plain, human, good sense. The pioneering figures, Goodman (e.g. 1968, 1979), Frank Smith (e.g., 1978), and Marie Clay (e.g., 1980), have continued to inform the movement. Recent work in writing, such as is brought together in Temple et al. (1982), extends insights over the full corpus of literacy. Practical professionals, such as Robert and Marlene McCracken (1979), Bill Martin Jr. and Peggy Brogan (1972), Mark Aulls (1982), Anne Pulvertaft (1978), and F. L. Barrett (1982) in their diverse ways support teachers in the daily enterprise of application. Researchers too numerous to list, among them David Doake, Judith Newman, Elizabeth Sulzby, and Robert Teale, push back the frontiers.

Space does not permit a discussion of the written language and related arts aspects of shared book experience programs. When children are motivated to express themselves under the influence of a rich and highly familiar literature, and when such facilitating conditions for expression are provided, the outcomes are extremely satisfying. The whole set of ideas, sometimes referred to now as "holistic," is complex, rich, and compelling. Certainly it promises us a clarity beyond eclecticism and an opportunity to use our own deep responses

to what is memorable in print toward the mastery of literacy within the environment of early schooling.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has attempted to describe a complex movement of research and development spread over some 15 years and involving professional contributions too numerous and too subtle to be fully analyzed. There is an obvious need for specific research of many kinds within this framework. The purpose of this paper has been to bring together a set of ideas which both challenges some of our most sacred instructional assumptions and points to alternative models as appropriate and eminently workable.

The acquisition of spoken language in infancy is a highly complex process, but there are a number of very simple and natural insights at the center of our success in providing favorable conditions for the process to be learned. Experience and research suggest that a very similar set of simple and natural insights facilitate the mastery of literacy skills. Among these is that we may provide favorable conditions for learning literacy tasks in developmental ways such as using children's favorite books, and the powerful strategies they induce, at the very center of the literacy program.

References

Ashton-Warner, Sylvia. *Teacher*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.

Aulls, Mark, W. *Developing readers in today's elementary school*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982.

Barrett, F.L. *A teacher's guide to shared reading*. Toronto: Scholastic, 1982.

Bennett, Jill. *Learning to read with picture books*. Gloucester, Ont.: Thimble Press, 1979.

Butler, Dorothy. *Cushla and her books*. Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979.

Butler, Dorothy. *Babies need books*. Toronto: Bodley Head, 1980.

Butler, Dorothy, and Clay, Marie. *Reading begins at home*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1979.

Clay, Marie. *Reading: The patterning of complex behaviour*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1972.

Clay, Marie. *The early detection of reading difficulties: A diagnostic survey with recovery procedures*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1980.

Eastman, P.D. *Are you my mother?* New York: Beginner Books, 1960.

Goodman, Kenneth S. (Ed.). *The psycholinguistic nature of the reading process*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968.

Goodman, Kenneth, and Goodman, Yetta M. Learning to read is natural. In L.B. Resnik and P.B. Weaver (Eds.), *Theory and practice of early reading*, Vol. 1, pp. 137-154. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979.

Goodman, Yetta M. and Burke, Carolyn. *Reading strategies: Focus on comprehension*. New York: Holt Rinehart, 1980.

Holdaway, Don. *The foundations of literacy*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic, 1979.

Horton, Jo. *On the way to reading*. Wellington: Department of Education, 1978.

McCracken, Marlene J., and Robert A. *Reading, writing and language*. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1979.

Martin Jr., Bill, and Brogan, Peggy. *Teacher's guide to the instant readers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

Meek, Margaret. *Learning to read*. London: Bodley Head, 1982.

Pulvertaft, Anne. *Carry on reading*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic, 1978.

Smith, Frank. *Understanding reading*, 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

Temple, Charles A., Nathan, Ruth G., and Burris, Nancy. *The beginnings of writing*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982.

Veatch, Jeanette. *Individualizing your reading program*. New York: Putnam, 1959.

tip

Yetta M. Goodman

Retellings of Literature and the Comprehension Process

What is involved in a reader's comprehension of literature? What happens during the act of reading itself and what occurs at the end of the reading that has impact on a reader's comprehension? In what way do the features of written literature aid or interfere with readers' comprehension? Through miscue analysis (Goodman and Burke, 1972), which always includes reader's retellings of what they have read, researchers and teachers can begin to find some answers to these questions. In this paper, I will share what insights I have gained from retellings of literature into readers' comprehension processes and then discuss the significance for instruction.

Two aspects of reading which help us understand comprehension processing have been identified by Kenneth Goodman, the developer of miscue analysis. These aspects are: comprehending, the process of trying to make sense of a text; and comprehension, what the reader has understood the text to mean at any point in time. Retellings after reading provide another opportunity for the reader to continue to construct the text. They extend and enhance the reader's comprehending and comprehension processes while they provide evidence for and insights into understanding these two processes for teachers and researchers.

Comprehending is the process of how the reader integrates reading strategies such as predicting and confirming with the language cueing systems, the graphophonic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic systems. Comprehending is revealed in the semantic and syntactic acceptability of language structures produced by the reader and reflected by the quality of miscues that readers produce and their patterns of self-correction. One major difference between good and poor readers is their control over the comprehending process. Proficient readers are able to integrate their uses of strategies and cueing systems to produce a text which generally results in semantically and syntactically acceptable structures.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate how two fourth graders deal with a passage from the story, "Freddie Miller, Scientist," by Lillian Moore (1965). In Figure 1, the reader changes syntactic structures (represented by the writing over the text sentences) but her predicting and confirming strategies help her produce a passage of text which minimally alters the meaning of the passage.

518 I'LL GET MOTHER," HE CALLED TO
ELIZABETH. HE KNEW ∧ THIS
that
be
519 COULD BECOME A SERIOUS MATTER.
(uc) *2. sister* *1. mother* *cried*
520 HIS SISTER'S CRIES (GREW) LOUDER.
"DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE.
521 IT'S DARK IN HERE."

Figure 1. A fourth-grader's reading of a passage from "Freddie Miller, Scientist." The written-in words

Yetta M. Goodman is professor of education at The University of Arizona.

indicate the child's insertion or substitution while the circled words indicate an omitted word. In line 520, she reads "mother" first and then substitutes "sister." The line under *sister's* and the abbreviation, *uc* (uncorrected), indicate the child regressed to reread but did not produce the expected text word.

518 I'LL GET MOTHER," HE CALLED (TO)

ELIZABETH. HE KNEW THIS

519 COULD BECOME (A) SERIOUS MATTER.
some *servant*

520 HIS SISTER'S CRIES GREW LOUDER.

"DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE.

521 IT'S DARK IN HERE."
It is

Figure 2. A less proficient fourth grade reader's reading of the passage.

Although the reader in Figure 2 does produce acceptable structures, when she produces unacceptable structures she makes no attempt to correct. She also seems preoccupied with the form of language as she reads slowly and carefully the full forms for the contraction, showing more concern for a careful oral reading than for making sense.

By examining comprehending apart from comprehension we are able to gain insights into the way in which readers are trying to make sense of the author's text at any moment during the reader's transaction with the text. Also adding to these insights, which are crucial for both teachers and researchers interested in comprehension, is the process of retelling.

The retelling procedure reported here includes an unaided retelling followed by open ended questions expanding on information the reader has already provided during the unaided retelling. Any format that takes places after reading, such as retelling, can never completely represent comprehension; however, the retelling procedure when compared with other procedures, constrains the least the reader's ability to represent what has been comprehended. It never guarantees that the reader will fully represent what has been comprehended.

By using quantitative scores cautiously and relating the knowledge gained about the reader's retelling to other aspects of comprehension processing, such as the patterns of semantic and syntactic acceptable structures readers produce in reading aloud, retellings can provide insights for teachers or researchers about comprehension processing. The following conclusions about predictability, relevance, and conceptual complexity in literature have come from the examination of hundreds of readers' retellings.

Predictability and Relevance

Readers use their background knowledge in order to select and predict the author's message at various linguistic levels. That is, the reader predicts the sounds, letters, words, phrases, and clauses, as well as the meaning of the story and how the story is organized.

An overall context is also predicted, probably at the initiation of the reading, which helps guide the predictions at all the other language levels. For example, the reader must decide very early whether a story will be realistic fiction or fantasy. The name of the author, book cover, title, and initial sentences, if the reader chooses to make use of them, provide cues which the reader may use for predicting and generating hypotheses. The more predictable the story is to the reader—the more familiar the language of the text, the actions of the characters, the description of the setting, the sequence of events—the closer the reader's predictions will match the author's expression and the easier the text will be for the reader to comprehend. This degree of familiarity to the reader can be considered the degree of relevance the story has for the reader. Even when the author surprises the reader with unpredictable structures, style, and content, the greater the familiarity the reader has with many aspects of the text, the more quickly and easily the reader can disconfirm inappropriate predictions in order to self-correct.

The degree of relevance of the literature to the reader aids considerably in its predictability. However, relevance to readers is a complex set of relationships.

In one miscue study (Goodman and Goodman, 1978), readers used what were termed culturally relevant materials. Each subject in the study read and retold two stories. One was called the standard story and had been read by subjects in previous miscue analysis studies. A second story was chosen which more closely represented the cultural background of the varied populations in the study. These were called culturally relevant stories. Many of the subjects were able to retell the standard stories more easily and with greater understanding than

the culturally relevant story. As we examined why this might be, the complexity of the concept of relevance for any one particular reader was explored.

We identified seven aspects of life's experience other than ethnicity which need to be considered when exploring the issues of relevancy. These include:

1. Socio-cultural-economic institutions including such relations as: occupations, housing patterns, family relationships, schooling, religion, etc.
2. Setting
3. Chronological time
4. Age and sex of characters
5. Language variations represented in the text
6. Theme, moral, world view
7. Readers' experience with certain kinds of texts

If we examine one of the standard stories which many readers were able to retell better than their culturally relevant story with this list in mind, we can see how this story can be considered relevant even though the ethnicity of the characters in the stories do not match the ethnic background of the readers.

"Freddie Miller, Scientist" is a story about a boy who gets in trouble by trying a number of scientific experiments which fail. Finally, his inventiveness saves his younger sister and he becomes a hero in the eyes of his family.

The family is typical to the point of being stereotypic. Freddie has a younger sister. Mother works in the kitchen. Father works away from home. The story takes place in the home and could occur in the present time. Freddie could be from 9 to 12 years old. Our subjects usually think Freddie is their own age. The story has a pattern which is common and frequent in basal readers, although it may not be common to the everyday experience of the reader. The readers also seem to relate to the overall story structure of Freddie's getting into trouble, although always with good motives, ending with a final event through which he achieves respect in the eyes of his family.

One fourth grade Arabic subject provided an example of the relevance of "Freddie Miller, Scientist" in his retelling.

"He (Freddie) want to be a man . . Because he make science and things and so his father proud of him and tell him, you're a man."

Hawaiian Pidgin and Hawaiian Samoan subjects had much better retellings of "Freddie Miller, Scientist" than their culturally relevant story, called "Royal Race" by Robert Eskridge (1966). "Royal Race," set in the Hawaiian Islands, is about two young boys in competitive sport, but the story takes place in olden times when kings still ruled tribal groups. The competitive sport, only for royalty, is a race on sleds down the side of a mountain on a track made of rocks. The sleds are seen only in museums now. The experiences lived by the characters in this story are unrelated to the lives of the Hawaiian Pidgin group, who have as much Oriental as Hawaiian cultural background, and even to the Hawaiian Samoan group, considering their modern cultural experiences.

For Navajo subjects, the culturally relevant story was easier to retell than "Freddie Miller, Scientist." *Salt Boy* by Mary Perrine (1968) presents information on the agricultural life of the Navajos and focuses on some shepherding and horse raising customs. The male character yearns to learn how to rope, saves one of his mother's lambs, and has a sensitive relationship with his father. The Navajo fourth graders found this more relevant to their lives and did a better job of retelling it.

Although some other factors of text also affect predictability, the more a reader's own life's experience is relevant to the experiences expressed in a text, the greater the predictability and the easier it will be to comprehend.

As with many other conclusions about the reading process, there are exceptions which need to be addressed. Reading or listening to a lot of a certain kind of literature in and of itself helps to make it relevant. Therefore, it shouldn't have surprised us that some readers had trouble with relevant stories. Because of a lack of relevant reading experiences, some readers don't expect stories to be relevant to their lives.

Sometimes the readers had difficulty with the names of people and places related to their own culture. They had limited experience reading about people like themselves and did not expect to find familiar proper names, language structures which represent their own native language dialect, or experiences very familiar to their lives outside of school. In *Sancho* by Helen Rushmore (1972), a story about a Mexican woman named Rosita who has a "way with animals known throughout the ranch country," Spanish terms occur once in the story—tortilla, tamales, frijoles.

Most of the South Texas bilingual Spanish-English children who read this story did not predict such linguistic terms and read non-words that sounded like tor-til-la for tortillas; far-see-jolees and fra-jews for frijoles. They read Rosita as Rosetta or Rossta. One child who produced a non-word for frijoles used the information in the story to disconfirm his miscue so that in his retelling he talked about the "frijoles that the lady in the story cooked." In many cases, however, a lack of experience with literature interferes with any kind of story being predictable.

Conceptual Complexity and Predictability

New concepts and their accompanying labels are not by themselves what cause conceptual complexity. There is an interplay between the knowledge readers have and the degree to which an author explicates and provides appropriate cohesive devices so that readers can develop concepts through their reading.

Readers may assume that certain concepts are unknown or certain words or phrases are unfamiliar and omit them as they read, or they may try different non-words or inappropriate real words throughout a text for the same text word and then when referring to the text word in their retelling use still other non-words or inappropriate real words. This strategy suggests that readers have a handle on *knowing when they don't know.* Readers indicate through miscue analysis and their retellings that they use complex predicting and confirming strategies when they are concerned with unfamiliar words or phrases representing unfamiliar concepts in a text.

Misconceptions and concepts seem to develop in the same way. Readers use their own storehouse of knowledge to relate labels to new concepts and relate them to the information available from the author. Based on this interaction between themselves and the author, readers may develop concepts about things they have never heard of before or about words for which they may have conceptual understanding but no label. There are a number of good examples in "Freddie Miller, Scientist."

Many readers tell about Freddie's movements up and down stairs as he experiments and finally as he helps Elizabeth by putting the flashlight he has made through the transom into the closet where Elizabeth is accidentally locked up. Following are excerpts taken from four different pages in the order they occur about the particular concepts related to *cellar* and *transom.* These are followed by excerpts from the retellings of selected fourth grade subjects responding to these concepts.

Text Excerpts

> Taking the clock to the cellar, Freddie worked hard. . .
> Freddie hurried to his cellar worktable.
> Just as he got the parts in place, he heard a faint tapping and a voice calling, somewhere above.
> When Freddie ran up from the cellar, he heard his sister's voice calling, "Freddie". . .
> Freddie, trying to think, looked up at the small window above the closet door. He had an idea! "Listen, Elizabeth," he called. "I'll fix a light and drop it to you through the transom."
> He ran to the cellar and picked up. . .
> He tied a string around the end of the ruler and hurried back upstairs. Pulling the kitchen step-ladder out into the hall and climbing up on it, he found the transom within easy reach. "Elizabeth," he called. "I'm going to drop this light down to you through the transom. Catch it by the ruler and let me know when you can reach it."

Retelling Excerpts

Spanish child:

> Freddie went downstairs to "crell" (a non-word produced by the child) . . . then he came out . . . He pulled the ladder to his sister and then he went up and put the flashlight to the ceiling. Freddie did his work in a cellar.

Navajo child (translated from Navajo):

> He says to come upstairs. Elizabeth went upstairs. Then he went back downstairs and made the flashlight. And went back upstairs. Then he gave the flashlight to Elizabeth. . . . I think he broke down a wall and gave it to her.

Appalachian child:

> He (Freddie) was doing things with his chemistry set in the cellar . . . He had a string tied to the end of the ruler and he slid it down on . . . I forgot what you call it. I think it's a cellar. He slid it down and I don't know what it does . . . so it could get to Edith. He dragged the ladder out and there was a window up on top of the door that went down to the chute-like.

Arabic child:

> And if he came a flashlight, then he put, got it down from . . . forgot that name. And then he went down in the basement, I think, to the table, and he tried another big experiment. I think where he put it was the top . . . on the top of the door and it was glass and it opens and closes.

All readers use information from the text for their retellings. What causes the differences among readers' retellings is the set of schemata and experiences which readers bring to their reading. A reader who has had experiences with closets, transoms, cellars, and life in a more-than-one-story house will be able to assimilate the information provided by a story like "Freddie Miller, Scientist" differently than those who have had limited experiences with closets, cellars, or transoms. This will be true whether they have heard of the particular word or not. Readers who know basements can say to themselves as they read *c-e-l-l-a-r* (whether or not they pronounce the label appropriately), "Oh, that's some kind of basement." If they know basement as one kind of subterranean floor in a building and cellar as a place where winter vegetables are stored, such as the Appalachian subject, they may need to make some modifications in order to predict how Freddie could be doing his experiments in a cellar.

On the other hand, the student who has had little personal experiences with any kind of subterranean floor and who has no idea of its purpose will have great problems trying to understand how Freddie helped Elizabeth. Those who know closets as little open cubicles in which a person can hang up clothes, such as the boarding school Navajo subject, are going to be confused about how Elizabeth got locked in a closet in the first place and how Freddie got the light to her. The cues in the story help those who already know about cellars, transoms, and closets to predict and understand what happened. To those who have had little or no experience with such places in a home or school, the cues can suggest what happened but provide a confusing picture of aspects of the story.

Retellings provide a large amount of data for researchers to gain insight into a reader's comprehension processes, but this should not make us lose sight of the applications for instruction that retellings can serve.

Retellings As Presenting

> This is my letter to the world
> that never wrote to me—
> the simple news that nature told
> with tender majesty
>
> (E. Dickinson, cited in Smith et al., 1970)

Retelling a story is an opportunity for a reader to present his or her ideas to the world and to have an additional opportunity to rehearse the story again and to integrate it, modify it, and add to its comprehension.

In *Language and Thinking in School,* Smith et al. (1978) talk about education being conceived as "coming to know through the symbolic transformation and representation of experience." This process involves three phases of mental activity: perceiving, ideating, and presenting (pp. 96-97). The comprehending process of reading encompasses the first two phases: perceiving new data in the environment; and ideating upon the perceptions which includes conceptualizing and generalizing. The third phase, presenting ideation to oneself and others, occurs during retelling; retellings are one type of presentational form. Presenting one's concepts and generalizations to others allows the presenter to hear reflection from others and build shared meanings. The presenter tests his or her view of reality against the notion of others (p. 116). The opportunity to present a piece of literature just read to others or to talk about it with others can occur in a variety of settings.

The reader may engage in a silent monologue living through the story experiences through telling or imagery for self. For instruction, this would mean providing time for reflection as part of reading experiences. Or it may mean finding ways for the reader to share the story with others.

In adapting retelling procedures to the classroom, the teacher needs to provide opportunities for readers to relate, rethink, and continue to make sense of the story—to continue comprehending. At the same time, comprehension also will be facilitated.

Anyone who has been in educational settings knows about negative experiences which readers can have when presentational forms are overly controlled by the teacher, such as traditional book reports, and short answer and other closed question formats. However, it may be in the zeal to protect children from ineffective and negative educational practices that teachers have minimized the signif-

icance of providing opportunities for presenting to occur during the process of coming to know literature. We should think about how eagerly children discuss a movie or TV drama or sports events they have seen.

I believe that retellings adapted from miscue analysis for instructional strategies will significantly expand both comprehending and comprehension. Given opportunity to present, the reader can try out ideas, suggest events, regroup, self-correct, and keep presenting. Retellings can be done individually or in small groups, either orally or in written form.

For the reader, an open-ended retelling brings together ideas. There are many examples in our data which show that readers who don't know a label for something are able in the retelling to use the word itself or are at least able to relate the event or a definition similar to it, constructing new and expanded meanings.

There are times when readers may attempt to cut off comprehension, saying "That's all I remember." However, with supportive probing during retelling, readers continue to organize and think through what they have read.

Many years ago when I taught children's literature to pre-service teachers, I asked students to read Shel Silverstein's *Giving Tree* (1964). I collected a wide range of interpretations in almost every class. One woman said she was so impressed with the message of love, unselfishness, and giving, that she and her future husband had decided they would exchange lines from the book during their wedding ceremony.

Another student countered that he hated the book because it showed such obvious selfishness, and because the author condones the behavior of a boy who continues to take and take, never giving anything in return.

One student said she liked the conservationist message in the story because all of the tree was used for practical purposes. Nothing was wasted.

"But," replied another student, "It was used for only one person's selfish purposes." Therefore, according to her, it was an anticonservationist view of the world. The young man even carved his initials in the tree—what more could prove a lack of respect for nature.

Another student believed the story represented the control of a child's behavior by a domineering stereotyped Jewish mother who always brought her son back to her by giving so much of herself that he had to return because of his feelings of guilt and dependence. As evidence to support his interpretation, the student cited the name of the author who "must be Jewish."

At this a feminist student declared "this is the most sexist book I've ever read. The author calls the tree 'she' throughout. He treats her like dirt, always coming back to her and demanding more from her. And she continues to give without complaint. And finally, to show his true contempt for women, he sits his ass right down on top of her."

As I used this book for a number of years, I noticed two things. First, the varied interpretations. Second, the modification and adaptation of the reader's interpretations as we all reacted to and interacted, sharing our meanings of the text. Without the discussion each of us would have projected our own values and created a personal, but narrow, view of the text.

I believe any individual interpretation of literature is quite unique, varying greatly from others, and only through the sharing of interpretations of their personal searches for the meanings of stories can readers build a shared meaning. There has been little research on the impact of the group in determining interpretation of literature because research on comprehension has tended to match an individual reader's retellings with the researcher's or teacher's view of the author's text. Bartlett's study (1961) on remembering is very much concerned with the impact of the social group, but this has been generally overlooked. Bartlett believed that "the manner and the matter of recalls are often predominantly determined by social influences" (p. 244).

We need to analyze readers' interpretations more respectfully and carefully. If my hunch is true about the significance of shared meanings and its relationship to individual interpretations of literature, then retellings and discussion take on added importance. Pre-service and inservice teachers need to develop ways to lead discussions and develop questioning techniques which legitimatize the uniqueness of an individual's interpretation of literature but at the same time show respect for the opinion of others in order to build the shared meanings of the social community.

My purpose in this paper has been two-fold. First, to demonstrate the significance of retellings so that both researchers and curriculum developers will continue to explore the richness of retellings as well as other presentational forms. Second, by relating retelling to both comprehending and comprehension, my purpose has been to expose the complexity of understanding literature and the way

humans process it. We must always be consciously aware of the intricate personal and social influences on readers of literature as they come to know.

References

Bartlett, F. C. *Remembering.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961.

Eskridge, R. Royal race. In Albert J. Harris et al., *The magic word,* Book IV. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

Goodman, K., and Goodman, Y. *Reading of American children whose language is a stable rural dialect of English or a language other than English.* NIE Report C-00-3-0087, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978.

Goodman, Y., and Burke, C. *Reading miscue inventory.* Chicago: Richard C. Owens, Publisher, 1972.

Moore, L. Freddie Miller, scientist. In Emmet A. Betts and Carolyn M. Welch. *Adventures here and there.* New York: American Book Co., 1965.

Perrine, M. *Salt boy.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.

Rushmore, H. *Sancho.* Champaign, Ill.: Gerrard Publishing Co., 1972.

Smith, E. B., Goodman, K., and Meredith, R. *Language and thinking in elementary school.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970.

Smith, E. B., Goodman, K., Meredith, R. *Language and thinking in school.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978.

Silverstein, S. *Giving tree.* New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

tip

Dorothy Butler

Reading Begins at Home

Few of us harbor doubts about the truth of the proposition that "reading begins at home." But because I am an optimist, I should like to insert the word "ideally." As one who is committed to the daily task of helping those children whose reading has *not* begun at home—or anywhere else, for that matter—to achieve not only fluency, but a love of books, I cannot have the lights dimmed before the action even starts.

In my private life I am surrounded by babies whose determined efforts to turn the pages are daily becoming more effective; toddlers who want *Whistle for Willie* (Keats, 1964) this morning, not *Drummer Hoff* (Emberly, 1967) (but have ways and means of ensuring that you read *both*, twice) and 4-year-olds who are to be seen counting Phoebe's hot water bottles just in case the artist has failed to depict one hundred and fifty seven. I know these children are ordinary kids, as kids go (though never to *us*, their doting family!). I don't have any special expectation of them in the academic stakes—in fact I know, because I see it in action, that many of the best-equipped and most stable adolescents are turning away, at least temporarily, from formal education, which seems to offer little in the kaleidoscopic conditions they see around them.

But I have hopes that these children will face life with confidence and good humor; that the "why" and "how" of their present lives will not ebb away down the river of apathy; that the alert eyes will never be replaced with the shadows of disillusionment, the shrugged shoulder, the curled lip. Most of all, I hope they will care about themselves and other people; that they will love intensely at close quarters, and with compassion further afield; that they will be prepared to translate concern into action, to risk voicing unpopular opinions.

I expect them to read smoothly, when the time comes; to drop into reading—or perhaps to *move* into reading—because desirably, there is no jar, no change of pace. I believe these children are learning to read *now*, that the process began at birth, and will merely accelerate when confrontation with the symbol becomes precise, rather than casual.

Fascinating insights into the child's view of reading have fallen into my lap via this energetic brood over the last few years. A small grandson, at school for a mere month, was promoted out of the "new-entrant" group because of his aptitude at reading. He is given to dramatic utterance:

"How can a boy who cannot read very well," he demanded theatrically of his mother, "be put up?" His mother suggested that at school they must consider that he is learning quickly. "But I can't *read* yet," he said firmly.

Realistic self-assessment on the part of a 5-year-old! And acute assessment of the reading task, too. Clearly, for this child, one is not *reading* until meaning pours from the page into the mind. Now, at exactly 6, he reads fluently, but has not, himself, remarked upon this fact. He still prefers his parents to read aloud to him, from thick "chapter" books. Sensible child!

Dorothy Butler, an author, bookseller, former high school teacher, and 1982 Arbuthnot Honor Lecturer, resides in Auckland, New Zealand.

To everyone's surprise, his near 4-year-old brother (thought originally to be less bookish) listens raptly at these sessions. So much for early diagnosis. My daughter attests to having continued to read, doggedly, several years ago, while son No. 2 all but swung from the roof beams! Now he loves his own picture books and older brother's "big books" as well. Both boys currently contend with a 2-year-old sister who peruses their uninteresting-looking volume for a few minutes, listens with increasing impatience, and then trots off to fetch the book of *her* choice. Returning, she does her best to insinuate herself and *Peepo* or *Farming with Numbers* between her mother and her brothers. There is evidence that she is sometimes (though still not often) prepared to wait her turn, as children will do in the course of time, if evidence exists that their turn *does* come.

Revealing also was the lugubrious statement of another grandson, aged 4½. "And I can't read!" he said, almost accusingly, as the last item in an impressive list of complaints. Then, reflectively, "Well, I can read just Thomas" (his name). "No I can't" (with returning despair). "I can just read *Thomas*, not *just*!" Clear proof that he knew about words and the way they work together to create meaning; a prerequisite for reading which cannot be assumed to be present and is often overlooked by those who would brandish word cards in isolation at children.

I have used real children instead of hypothetical ones because I want to demonstrate to you that I am inordinately fortunate in having this daily affirmation of the truth that reading *does* begin at home, for some children at least. But I should define my terms. By *reading* I do not mean that laborious translation of symbol into sound which may, in the end, avail the child a reasonable mark on a "Reading Age" test, but little more. I mean, rather, a gulping down of print in support of a developing theme, an ongoing series of events or a case for a particular viewpoint; a process that is both stimulating and self-reinforcing.

I believe *real* reading proceeds in the mind of the reader; that the reader is "taken over," as it were, by the content of the passage he or she is reading; that however valuable the book itself may be, the form it assumes in the mind of the reader is, for that person, the reality. Limited only by the actual worth of the particular book as a literary experience, it becomes part of the reader, remaining long after the details of its plot or its argument are consciously remembered.

Recently, after a gap of 20 years, I reread Erich Fromm's book *The Art of Loving* (1956). It is not a long book and it made, now as all those years ago, compulsive reading. At regular intervals through it, I found myself laughing aloud, in a near-ecstasy of rediscovery. Of course! I have been quoting Fromm, without recognizing I was doing so, ever since I first met this book. His views had touched mine at various points, startled me at others, and in parts offered an extension, a new idea, an unexpected qualification to an established or tentative belief. No wonder I have never actually forgotten *The Art of Loving*. It became part of me at first reading and is still there, in essence.

So it is for children who become real readers. Those of you who have been committed readers from childhood will know this; will be able to identify the niche in your mind which harbors *Treasure Island, Little Women, Huckleberry Finn,* or *Heidi,* even though the minute details may have slipped away. The same is true for many other books whose titles cannot be recalled. We feel them there; they made an impression; they survived total oblivion. Every experience which is truly felt alters what is already there. The process by which our minds have arrived at their present state is one of constantly shifting patterns, as experience and impression are absorbed and sifted, and existing material rearranged, modified, or given new emphasis.

Think of the opportunity for learning that is present in the pre-school years! The cry has gone up with startling resonance over the last 10 years, and with some startling results. Not the least of these has been the demand, in some quarters, that children of 2 and 3 years of age (or even younger) be "taught to read." Let's look at this demand, its implications, and the source of the outcry.

In my experience, parents who read widely themselves, and have automatically surrounded their children with books and all that goes with them, are relatively unaffected by this propaganda. Ironically, it is the children of *these* parents who are unlikely to be damaged by the suggested procedures if their parents do decide to take action. With an extensive background of spoken and understood language, complete with established structures into which the single words recommended by the designers of such "schemes" may fit, these children quickly succeed. On the other hand, most of them can be relied upon to tire very quickly of a game in which there seems neither point nor profit: the identification of dull words, one by one, in isolation.

The father of a very competent 3-year-old I know raised a laugh (but touched on a valid point) when he reported his experience with such a campaign. "She behaved as if she thought I was mad," he said ruefully. "It was fun for quite all of 5 minutes. I've never succeeded in getting her back to it!"

The other side of this coin is that the parents who are most likely to be successfully wooed by the propaganda are those least likely to have introduced their children to books early in life. In most of these cases, the parents' own lack of sophistication in the language field understandably prevents their appreciation of the importance of language in the development of their children's thought processes. The over-simplified philosophy of the protagonists in this field naturally appeals:

Reading is important in educational achievement, they say. Therefore, the earlier children are taught to read, the better. Reading equals decoding letters into words, and combining words into sentences. This is simple, if the rules are taught, so why not start *your* child *now* ?"

It makes thrilling listening, one senses, to people who have themselves failed to achieve in the merciless world of education and who want better things for their children. And the argument is so difficult to rebut. How to explain—to adults who have never themselves felt the benefit of a rich and complex well of language; who have never been moved to anger, pity, or joy by a tale in a book; —that *these* are the things children need to "start early" on; that children who cut their teeth on nursery rhymes, learn to walk with the Gingerbread Man, go adventuring with Harry, the dirty dog (Zion, 1956) at 3 and are off with the Jumblies (Lear, 1907) at 4 *are* learning to read; in fact, are so near to mastery that fussing with the symbol is irrelevant.

With regret, I turn my back on the contemplation of well-equipped children and address myself to the plight of those whose reading, if it has begun at all, has not proceeded beyond the foothills. The heights for these children seem impossibly distant, and receding all the time. What of them?

I have always been exasperated with the school of thought which would give children who are failing in reading more and more of the same old thing. This inevitably means requiring the child to read aloud while the adult listens—a soul-destroying exercise for the one and an agony of boredom for the other. Can anything good ever come out of such an encounter? What a way for two human beings to mutually explore a book! Mind you, it is unlikely that the book they embark upon has much to offer in the way of incentive—but it may potentially sparkle like sun on the sea, and its treasures go unnoticed by this glum pair!

If we believe that, ideally, reading begins at home, with children listening eagerly to stories which make them sit up and take notice, laugh, and ask "Why?" then we must somehow try to duplicate this experience for our so-called "retarded" readers.

"The child who is listening expertly . . . is well on the road to reading."

Any game which requires the degree of intellectual energy which the acquisition of reading demands from these children must be seen to be worth the candle. How can such children know that there is a world of pleasure and excitement in books? Why should they believe us, when their experiences have been dismal, defeating ones?

Even more important to supply is the answer to this question: How can we show them this in such a way that they *see*? The educational world is full of teachers busily teaching and children apathetically not learning; what is taught is hardly ever what is learned. Can we do any better in this venture, perhaps the most important mission we will ever embark upon?

I believe we can. To begin with, we can read to these children. Has anyone ever taken a class of 9-year-olds who can't read and are scared of books and spent 6 months weaning them to the notion that books are great? No more lessons: Start the day with a few stories read aloud—funny, short stories first, with an infiltration of gripping, breath-catching stories as time goes by—so that in the end you can squeeze in a serious or a sad one, and feel them all *feeling*. No math, science, history, geography (Heaven forbid!) but plenty of materials to handle—clay, wood, junk materials and props for play acting and, of course, music to gladden the heart and unlock the ice which binds the spirit.

And books galore—not in a tangled mass, but especially chosen for these children. All the good old tales, from Rumpelstiltskin to Beauty and the Beast through Ali Baba and David and Goliath; as many as possible in picture book editions illustrated by the best of the old and the new artists. Many of the best modern picture books are actually more successful with this age-group than with any other. I have found 9 and 10-year-old mouths open all the

way through Sendak's *Outside Over There* (1981), closing only to say "Read it again!" at the end. *Mr and Mrs Pig's Evening Out* (Rayner, 1976) will certainly prevent the solemn class next door from learning the 8 times table, and probably bring the principal running; but the stillness that settles on your class once you're a few pages into *Tim to the Rescue* (Ardizzone, 1949) will more than redeem your reputation.

Of course you must lay in lots of colorful, easy to follow books on how to make things, from puppets through peep-shows to space rockets, with materials to match. Reading "the next step" can, for many children, be a triumphant experience, in more ways than one.

By this time you will have a "chapter" book underway—almost certainly a *Henry Huggins* (Cleary, 1979)—but I hope, also, a book like Holling Clancy Holling's *Paddle to the Sea* (1969) (or should I say merely *Paddle to the Sea*, with *Tree in the Trail*, 1942, to follow, for wherever will we find another two such books?).

Can you imagine a family of New Zealand children thousands of miles away from the Great Lakes, or The Santa Fe Trail, their lives taken over for the whole of one summer by the fate of a tiny carved canoe, and a small cottonwood tree? I noted, as I consulted them, that both books have the same child's name in the front, with "Christmas, 1960" inscribed below it. This boy must have just turned 6, but everyone in the family, from his eldest sister of 13 downwards, was captivated by first one book, and then the other. You will certainly need more than one copy each of these two; the youngsters will want to pore over the whole-page pictures and the meticulous black and white sketches and diagrams in the margins.

Seabird (Holling, 1978) was acquired during the next year. The same old magic was seen to abide within its expansive pages, with, this time, the story of sail leading in the end to steam—a theme to enchant the child whose forbears braved the longest journey in the world in wooden sailing ships to settle in "the Antipodes."

Sadly, all of these titles are now "out of print" in an English edition, and so not readily available in my country. Our own old copies I guard jealously for grandchildren and other young friends. But how many teachers, inspecting one of them, would judge it "too hard" for a 9-year-old anyway; or, worse, "not relevant" to modern children's needs; or (worst of all!), prove to be looking for something with "a message"; or searching with quivering intensity for unpalatable attitudes from which the child must be sheltered? Must children grow up believing that no-one ever behaved selfishly, exploited nature cruelly, or held rigid racist or sexist attitudes in days gone by? Should our children not be told of the selfish actions and unworthy prejudices of earlier generations? Let them see that the people who held these views and performed these acts were people like themselves; that humankind falls easily into error, and that most people accept the mores of the era and society into which they are born, without question.

Children see with a directness and clarity abandoned by most of their elders as too painful. This is certainly the time to invoke their care for the world and its people; but not with deception. They will learn to look honestly, and respond sensitively if the books we give them are good books and true; full of real people behaving as well as they can in the face of a world which offers contradictory inducements, the good and the bad inextricably entwined. If children's moral education has not been started at their mother's knee (or in their father's lap) with *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* (Burningham, 1971), *Dogger* (Hughes, 1978) and *Mike Mulligan* (Burton, 1939), then we must do something about this as soon as possible.

Only *felt* principles ever work for human beings. Telling people they should be loving, compassionate, forgiving, nonviolent, unselfish, and honest is useless; but Mr Gumpy's sheer, unjustified kindness in the face of his friends' all too human foolishness will seep into their bones, because it comes on the wings of laughter, rhythm, and action. Dave's love for his undistinguished toy Dogger, his anguish at Dogger's loss, his splendid family's support and concern, his sister Bella's casual but monumental sacrifice for Dogger's retrieval—these things will take root.

And Mike Mulligan—constant, dogged Mike who, in the end, has the crowd cheering when they started out jeering—Mike will be there, along with "The Lazy Bear," "Burglar Bill," and "Little Tim," to prove that a good heart and a capacity for hard work will win through in the end. *And* to demonstrate that reading books is an occupation which has no counterpart in this world.

But none of these things will happen unless we make them. I don't believe reading skills will ever be implanted by techniques, unless a strong interest can be engendered first. "Motivation," the experts call it; though too many treat it as a con-

tributing factor rather than the absolutely essential condition it is.

I am not suggesting a set of calculated procedures designed to lure children into reading; rather, the experience of a way of life which involves books; a replica, in a classroom setting, of what happens in a fortunate family.

I have suggested, however sketchily, what might happen in a classroom where a dedicated teacher was determined to bring to books a group of children who have, for one reason or another, "missed out" in the reading field. There will be those who want to reply: "All very well, if there were unlimited funds, no compulsory curriculum, plenty of time. . . ." I have known several classrooms, in schools where funds were, as usual, limited, curriculum was, as ever, defined, and time no more generously available than elsewhere, where, nonetheless, an intensive program of book usage and enjoyment was underway from the time the children arrived in the morning until the end of the school day—and beyond, because one of the joyful spillovers from this sort of classroom is the extension of books into the children's outside lives.

This kind of teaching has to do with atmosphere, rather than the allocation of time or money. Just as books pervade and permeate some homes, just as ideas are discussed and passages from books and newspapers read aloud in some families and not in others, so are some classrooms book-based and others not. Bleakly one notes that this emphasis invariably and inevitably depends on the personality and taste of individual teachers. It is possible within one school to have a dozen or more teachers, each technically fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum, and yet in fact displaying an astonishing range of style and effectiveness.

Anyone who has shepherded a family of children through its school days knows that classroom atmosphere can range from the blissful to the abysmal, with every shade of quality between. The richest classroom may well be the poorest, in material terms. Schools are like households; it's the quality of the people rather than the furnishings which makes the difference from the child's point of view. Give me teachers of strong and loving heart, good humor, and imagination every time. Then our children have some chance of becoming truly human and of learning to read along the way. That such teachers are likely to be readers themselves is almost a truism.

These teachers will have faith in books and in their capacity to enrich children's lives. They will be determined to recruit children to *reading* ultimately, but to *listening* meanwhile. For this in itself is a huge step in the right direction.

The child who is listening expertly is employing the senses and techniques which the mature reader uses; he is well on the road to reading. He is able to accept and mentally process a stream of language; to order the ideas being presented, selecting the dominant, retaining the supportive, suppressing the irrelevant—relegating all to positions appropriate for maximum understanding of the author's message.

If we can bring children to listen in this way — and we can, if we attend to the quality and appeal of the material we are presenting, our own delivery, and last but by no means least, our own relationship with these listening children — if we can induce this sort of response to stories read aloud, then we may start to hope that we are creating an environment in which these children will learn to read. For we cannot teach them; they must learn. Our task is to facilitate this process.

For real reading, the eye must swing along the line while meaning pours into the mind. Expectation of meaning is crucial. Children with well-nourished minds draw on a deep well of concept and vocabulary to sustain their performance in the reading task. Response—the vital component—occurs almost automatically. Gleaning meaning from print can be a heady experience for such children; self-reinforcing, certain to be repeated.

"Thinking under the stimulus of the printed page," J. H. Jagger called it in 1929. Even earlier, in 1916, J. B. Kerfoot asserted that "no story is ever told by the author of a book; the telling is done by the reader, who takes the text for his scenario, and produces it on the stage of his own imagination, with resources furnished by his own experience of life." And literature, I would add in the case of a child whose experience is obviously more limited.

Teachers must find their own way of launching children into "doing it themselves"—an accomplishment which must be presented to the children as merely the next, logical step; never as a self-contained, alien task for which they are unequipped. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that children *are* equipped; that the structures of language are there, in their minds, for the written words to slip into and find life. I do not believe that the actual symbols present any great difficulty, in any but a tiny minority of cases.

"What the brain says to the eye is more important in reading than what the eye says to the brain," says Marie Clay (1979). We overlook this fact at our children's peril, and yet I believe it is overlooked in our schools every day.

"For real reading, the eye must swing along the line while meaning pours into the mind."

In the remaining space, I should like to describe the means by which we bring some children to joyful use of books, and subsequently to reading, in our Reading Centre in Auckland. This is a private venture which has absorbed a great deal of my time and energy over the last five years. For our purposes, we have set up a small, attractive "Book Theatre," equipped it with seating for a dozen or so children, a screen, and an opaque projector: an epidiascope.

This is a simple piece of equipment used by advertising agencies and some seats of higher learning to project printed material, one page at a time, onto a screen. A built-in light arrow makes it possible to draw the viewer's attention to any desired feature and, smoothly operated, to propel the eye of an onlooker along a line of print. The text is read aloud, at normal speed, by the person operating the arrow. The children's eyes travel along the line and down the page, as the meaning lodges in the mind. The story is always worth hearing, the semi-dark of the book theatre is friendly and non-threatening, and the lighted screen makes compulsive viewing.

Importantly, the experience is a personal one; the reader is a known and trusted person, the voice familiar. For the first time in their lives the children sit, for one half-hour at a time, with their eyes glued to the pages of a real book. I believe they are participating in a true and personal reading experience.

I wish the reader could see the expression on a new child's face when a book, just experienced and enjoyed on the screen, is handed to her, all toasted and warm, straight from the projector. "Cuddling the book" has become a hotly-contested privilege for our unself-conscious 6-to-9-year-olds. The older children, slower to confess to capitulation, are just as quickly involved in the program, ultimately just as anxious to take the books home.

It goes without saying that we run an extensive library. I make no apology for the fact that Trixie Beldon rubs shoulders with *Fireweed* (Walsh, 1970), or that Enid Blyton in most cases comes before Nina Bawden in our children's reading favor. Children who have no "reading habits," who have not learned to assemble a cast in their minds, remember the steps of a narrative through numerous plodding reading sessions, to make corrections, and return to the principal theme from secondary byways as necessary, must practice on simple material. That "formula" books are usually trite is regrettable but probably inevitable. The consideration is irrelevant in the face of the benefits of a simple structure, which permits unsophisticated readers to practice essential skills. I cannot allow my own literary prejudices to obstruct my real purpose: the provision of success for children whose experience of painful and despairing failure has all but crippled their chances for reading, before they come into my care.

In the face of adult skepticism, one can describe the method as a neurological impress system. Instant respectability! Parental suspicion (in the face of child enjoyment) quickly evaporates as the initial arousal of tentative, almost reluctant interest gives place to honest enthusiasm, and the first stirrings of confidence appear.

"What about the mechanics," ask the still-suspicious. In my experience, the older children are usually well-equipped with phonic skills, which avail them little while they retain their plodding word-by-word techniques of decoding. Poverty of resource—of experience, vocabulary, and imagination—is the real handicap. Persuading these children to launch themselves into the text is the crucial task, a task which takes care of itself in the face of an engrossing story, and the support of an accepting and known teacher. For the young children, those who have not been allowed to experience the bitter taste of failure, these sessions support any established method, or stand alone. The experience of the 7-year-old who has "just not made a start" and who suddenly discovers, in our book theatre, that he can read after all, is commonplace, if always thrilling. It occurred to me, only recently, that we may well be the only remedial reading center in the world to which enrolled children bring brothers, sisters, and friends, for a special treat. There is, necessarily, a waiting list for this privilege!

To the best of my knowledge, the first person to employ the techniques I have described was my countryman, Forbes Robinson, a retired school principal. This caring and perceptive teacher had for years used his insights into the reading task to help children come to books—first, through the use of multiple copies of attractive picture books, and

then, inspirationally, through the use of the epidiascope. This was his answer to a pressing problem: an answer which, with his support and encouragement, I have adapted for the needs of many hundreds of children over the last five years. Other people will find other ways. Here too, good heart and good humor matter more than technique.

Writing in 1966, Daniel Fader spoke of "poverty of experience—a poverty which can afflict lives lived at $100,000 a year just as readily as it curses the $1000 a year existence. The poorest man in the world," said Fader, "is the man limited to his own experience, the man who does not read." We may need to adjust Fader's income figures; his assertion remains as true today as it was 16 years ago.

Every child in the world who may become such a man or woman as he describes is a reflection on the humanity of those of us who have been handed our literacy skills on a golden platter. Getting children "hooked on books," to use Fader's own expression, is not hard if we clear away the rubble and bulk from our curricula and adopt a "first things first" philosophy. And first of all, on an unassailable pinnacle, comes reading, responsive, joyful reading. Unless we believe this, and respond to the challenge to make reading of this sort a reality for all children, we are likely to leave many of them stumbling among the foothills. Our children can all reach the ridges, and many of them the peaks. Let us all redouble our efforts to get them there.

References

Alcott, Louisa M. *Little women*. New York: Little, Brown, 1968.

Ardizzone, Edward. *Tim to the rescue*. Oxford University Press, 1949.

Burningham, John. *Mr. Gumpy's outing*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

Burton, Virginia Lee. *Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939.

Clay, Marie, and Butler, Dorothy. *Reading begins at home*. New York: Heineman Educational Books, 1979.

Cleary, Beverely. *Henry Huggins*. New York: Dell, 1979.

Clemens, Samuel. *Huckleberry Finn*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1981.

Emberley, Barbara. *Drummer Hoff*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1967.

Fader, Daniel. *Hooked on books*. Elmsford: N.Y.: Pergamon Press, 1966.

Fromm, Erich. *The art of loving*. New York: Harper and Row, 1956.

Holling, Holling Clancy. *Tree in the trail*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942.

Holling, Holling Clancy. *Paddle to the sea*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

Holling, Holling Clancy. *Seabird*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978.

Hughes, Shirley. *Dogger*. London: Bodley Head (Published in the U.S. as *David and dog*. Englewood Cliffs: N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978).

Jagger, J. H. *The sentence method of teaching reading*. London: Grant Educational Co., 1929.

Keats, Ezra Jack. *Whistle for Willie*. New York: Viking Press, 1964.

Kerfoot, J. B. *How to read*. Constable, 1916.

Lear, Edward. *The jumblies and other nonsense verses*. New York: Warne, 1907.

Rayner, Mary. *Mr. and Mrs. Pig's evening out*. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

Sendak, Maurice. *Outside over there*. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.

Spyri, Johanna. *Heidi*. New York: Penguin, 1957.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. New York: Penguin, 1975.

Walsh, Jill Paton. *Fireweed*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1970.

Zion, Gene. *Harry, the dirty dog*. New York: Harper and Row, 1956.

tip

Charlotte S. Huck

"I Give You the End of a Golden String"

William Blake was born over 200 years ago, but the past few years have seen a real revival of interest in both his poetry and his art. Four years ago I was fortunate enough to visit the William Blake Exhibit at the Tate Gallery in London and to see for myself the extraordinary vision of this man born ahead of his time. Then this year the Newbery Award Committee honored Nancy Willard for her poetry in *A Visit to William Blake's Inn* (1981) which the Provensens illustrated so superbly. Since this appears to be the year of Blake, I chose the title for this speech from his poem "Heaven's Gate":

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

Literature is a kind of golden string that can place us in contact with the best minds in every period of history, the wisest, the tenderest, the bravest of all who have ever lived. And it can do this for children, if only we can help them to grasp hold of it. We recognize that children's literature is a part of the mainstream of all literature, that one literature experience builds on the last one, provided children can see the connections and are helped to wind them into a ball.

We believe, too, in the power of literature to make us more human, more humane. Some of us are unhappy with the civilization's educated thinking man who can control the technological world with the push of a button, but who is not in control of his or her own personal emotions. What kind of an American citizen are our schools, our TV, our videogame crazed culture producing? Are we as interested in educating the heart we are the mind? Almost everything a child learns in school today is concerned with facts—literature is concerned with feelings, with the quality of life.

Charlotte Huck is professor of education at The Ohio State University.

Values of Literature

One of my favorite quotes is from Chukovsky (1963), a Russian poet and the author of that remarkable book, *From Two to Five*. He says:

> The goal of every storyteller consists of fostering in the child, at whatever cost, compassion and humanness, this miraculous ability of man to be disturbed by another being's misfortune, to feel joy about another being's happiness, to experience another's fate as your own (p. 138).

I recently finished reading the winner of the 1982 IRA Children's Book Award titled *Good Night Mr. Tom*. It is a long but powerful first novel written by an English woman, Michelle Magorian (1981). The story is about 8-year-old Willie Beach, who is evacuated from London just before the outbreak of World War II to Little Weirwold, a tiny village in the English countryside. An abused child of a single deranged mother, Willie is placed with a kindly but gruff widower who has almost become a recluse since the death of his wife and infant son. With the help of Mister Tom and his friends at school, Will

slowly begins to trust his new world; he learns to read, he learns he has a real gift for drawing, and he learns to laugh. Then his mother requests that he be returned to the city. Though sickeningly violent in parts, this is a deeply moving story in which a boy and a lonely old man nurture each other through mutual love. Others in the village are portrayed as real persons who also show compassion and understanding for both Will and Tom. It is a novel that educates the heart as well as the mind.

Through books, children can develop insights and understandings they never had before. They can begin to entertain ideas. Hyde Cox quotes Robert Frost as once asking "How many things have to happen to you before something occurs to you?" And then he goes on to say that the things that happen to you are events while the things that occur to you are ideas (Frost, 1959, p. 9). Entertaining ideas is almost the heart of education.

Listen to the way one fifth grader was beginning to entertain ideas through reading and discussing Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976) with her teacher:

Teacher: What do you think about *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Amy?
Amy: It was really good. I like it. It was kind of factual . . . like about slavery times, I just kinda like hearing about that and I like to read World War II stories, too.
Teacher: Not all the children in our class like historical fiction, but you like to read about olden times?
Amy: Well it's just that there are two ways of looking at it. One you just look at it as a regular old book and you just kind of shrug it off. But you could sometimes *think* about what people have done, and that maybe you don't agree with that. And sometimes it's like you can hear about people's situations and how things happen. It's just kind of fun to think in your mind—like what would you have done in that situation. Because it's real. It's not like it's something someone made up.
Teacher: Why do you think Mildred Taylor wrote that story?
Amy: Well, the way I saw it was to think about things that happened in the past. Not so much just to think of them as being gone and doesn't matter any more. But to think that it could happen in the future.

Children need to know that such things as slavery, the Holocaust, and nuclear war can happen. The horrors of these atrocities can only be personalized in the particular. History books can tell us that 6 million Jews were killed in Germany, but books such as Siegal's *Upon the Head of the Goat* (1981) help the child to *be there*, to be part of a Jewish family growing up in Hungary and finally to board the train for the "work camp" of Auschwitz.

American children need to be aware of our shadows, too. I hope *Journey to Topaz* by Uchida (1971) will be made into paperback or brought back into print soon for it tells of the deportation of Japanese Americans from California to Topaz, a concentration camp on the barren desert of Utah. If history books mention it, it is only one line. But this story quietly details what it did to the lives of one family. Jonathan Schell's terrifying book, *The Fate of the Earth* (1982), states that the only thing left of persons at the center of the bombing of Hiroshima were their shadows imprinted in the cement. We need to share with children such stories as Eleanor Coerr's true one of *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (1977) which is the moving account of a 10-year-old girl who developed leukemia after exposure to radiation in the bombing of Hiroshima. Sadako hoped to make 1,000 paper cranes before she died, but her wish was not granted, and her friends had to complete them for her. We have imprinted our shadow on the world and we need to be reminded of it. We teach facts in our schools—literature communicates feelings. Reading and discussing such books is one way of humanizing our children. I am not so naive as to think literature will save the world, but I do believe it is one of the things that makes this world worth saving.

Besides humanizing us, literature can help children to develop their imagination, that quality so essential in all we do, as necessary for the salesman as the architect, the plumber as the writer, the doctor as the artist. There's the wonderful story of the woman who had a young son who was brilliant in mathematics. She had an opportunity to ask Einstein how she should prepare him to achieve greatness in the field. Einstein thought for a moment and then said: "Read him the great myths of the past—stretch his imagination." Bruno Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) said nearly the same thing in relation to the value of fairy tales. "Fairy tales have unequaled value, because they offer new dimensions to the child's imagination which would be impossible for him to discover as truly on his own" (p. 7).

Today, television has made everything so explicit that children are not developing their own interior landscapes. One of the qualities of a well-written book for me is whether I can see it in my mind's eye, for I mentally visualize every book and poem I read. The books of the well-known Scottish author, Mollie Hunter, are rich in a sense of place. I can see scenes from her suspenseful story, *A Stranger Came Ashore* (1975), as if I had visited the Shetland Islands myself. The Great Selkie is the mysterious stranger who appears in a small fishing village at the same time as a ship is wrecked at sea. Thinking he is the sole survivor of the wreck, the islanders ask him no questions. On the night of his arrival, Robbie steals from his bed and sees the stranger staring into the eyes of the dog, Tam, commanding him to be still. As Tam shivers to a quiet, the stranger turns his piercing eyes on to Robbie, who quickly flees back to bed. Or there's the magic night of the ancient celebration of the Up Helly Aa as the skuddler and the guisers dance under the Northern Lights while Robbie tries to keep his eye on his sister, Elspeth, so the stranger (who by now the reader and Robbie have guessed to be the Great Selkie) won't steal her away to his kingdom under the sea. Finally, the reader is witness to the vivid clash by moonlight on the beach between the earth magic and sea magic. All of Mollie Hunter's books have this power to make you *see* the setting—to help you *be* there. She herself, writing in an article for *The Horn Book Magazine*, maintains that the whole reward of reading is

> . . . To have one's imagination carried soaring on the wings of another's imagination, to be made more aware of the possibilities of one's mind, to be thrilled, amazed, awed, enchanted—in worlds unknown until discovered through the medium of language and to find in those worlds one's own petty horizons growing wider and wider (Hunter, 1978, p. 435).

Finally, literature can help the child to begin to develop a sense of wonder, an appreciation for the beautiful, and joy in living. Today we have beautiful picture books for both younger and older children. Picture books may well be the child's first experience with real art. I love *Ox-Cart Man* written by the poet, Donald Hall (1979), who lovingly details the items that father takes to market almost as a litany:

> He packed a bag of wool
> he sheared from the sheep in April.
> He packed a shawl his wife wove on a loom
> from yarn spun at the spinning wheel
> from sheep sheared in April.
> He packed five pairs of mittens
> his daughter knit
> from yarn spun at the spinning wheel
> from sheep sheared in April.
> (unpaged)

The stunning pictures by Barbara Cooney portray the long trip to Portsmouth in the beauty of the fall season, and the long trip back when the trees are bare and the cycle of work must begin again. Text and pictures work together superbly to recreate the stately rhythm of work that defined the life of a 19th century New England farm family.

Dawn by Uri Shulevitz (1974) captures one glorious moment when an old man and his grandson row out on a lake together and watch the dawn come up. Human beings have always responded to beauty whatever their condition. I always remember the story that Victor Frankel (1963), the psychiatrist, told in describing his life in a German concentration camp. One day the inmates were sitting drinking their one cup of thin soup after a 16 hour work day and one of the prisoners came in to say "You've got to come and see the sunset." Most of them got up with difficulty and dragged their aching bodies outside to see a brilliant red sunset cutting through the steel grey clouds. Frankel overheard one prisoner whisper, "How beautiful the world *could* be" (p. 63). And so literature records the depths and heights of the human experience:

- It can develop compassion by educating the heart as well as the mind.
- It can help children entertain new ideas, develop insights they never had before.
- It can stretch the imagination, creating new experiences, enriching old ones.
- It can develop a sense of what is true and just and beautiful.

In Blake's words—"I give you the end of a golden string." If we would only give children the chance to grasp it!

The Teaching of Reading Today

We have heard from a panel of superior teachers who recognize these values as they make literature central to their curriculum by using real books to teach reading. Increasingly, more and more teachers are beginning to see the goal of

teaching reading as making *readers*, children who can read and *do* read.

However, the vast majority of teachers in this country still use basal readers, or reading systems as they have come to be called. Each child has a textbook and a workbook; the reward of finishing one is to go on to the next. Somewhere the teaching of reading got divorced from the use of real books and became equated with learning basic skills. The acquisition of reading skills became the goal of reading rather than the development of children who love to read.

With each new barrage of criticism leveled at the schools for their failure to teach reading, schools increased the amount of time they spent on reading—the amount of time spent on the *skills* of reading. We analyzed reading comprehension into some 367 subskills and expected mastery over each one of these isolated parts. We tested children more than we taught them. And we failed to make them readers. The latest report on the reading habits of the Americans was made by Terry Ley in *Media and Methods* (1979):

- 10 percent of the U.S. public is reading 80 percent of the books
- ½ of the adult population never reads a book through (p. 224).

To be fair to the schools, I don't believe they deserve all the blame for this. Actually, the teaching of reading in the classroom has not changed dramatically in the past 25 to 30 years. We *know* more about the process of learning to read, about the meaning of miscues, about the way a child tackles print, about the importance of personal meaning in what a child reads, but we have not incorporated that knowledge into our teaching methods. We have been using basal readers for years; we've had workbooks for at least 30 years and most teachers use them. A 1977 national survey reports that 94 percent of the teachers use commercial material to teach reading.

What has changed is the child's out-of-school environment. Today, on every poll that has been taken, children are watching TV from 5½ to 6 hours a day—longer than they are in school. I don't know about you, but I do know that is the time I became a reader. I read every book I could find, and I read constantly, under the covers at night with a flashlight, on trips in the car, on the pier of our summer cabin. In fact, I wonder if we didn't all become readers at home? But today even so-called good readers are not reading at home, they are watching TV. Remember this is the second generation of TV-raised children. Parents and teachers are watching almost as much as their children. If today's children watch until midnight, the only reading they do is at school. And since that is mostly short stories from basal readers and filling in blanks in workbooks, it is no wonder reading scores have gone down. Children have had no time to read for *their* enjoyment. They have had no time to practice reading full length books in order to develop fluency of reading. For only as children lose themselves in the sustained reading of a book they love, do they become readers.

I think Frank Smith (1971) is right when he says you learn to read by reading (p. 222). Yet the majority of our children get little or no sustained reading at school and none at home. Instead of going back to the basics and giving children more and more skills, we should free children to discover the pleasures in reading. An article in *The Reading Teacher* by Shirley Koeller (1981) points out that many of the leaders of the profession have been advocating the use of children's literature in the reading program for over 25 years. At long last the research and theory supporting a literature based reading program is piling up. If we put into practice what we now know, we would change the look of reading in our schools drastically. We just might build a new Jerusalem through releasing children to literature. What would such a program look like? First, we would have to reorder our priorities.

A Literature Based Reading Program

The first order of business would be to restore the daily read-aloud time for children of all ages. We have overwhelming research to prove the value of hearing stories read aloud to the child's developing sense of story, linguistic development, and reading success. Margaret Clark's (1976) study of young fluent readers in Scotland showed that all of them had been read to at an early age and had access to books either in the home or through the library (p. 102). Durkin's (1961) earlier study of children who learned to read prior to school reported the same findings; all children had been read to from the age of 3 years, and all children came from homes which respected education (pp. 163-166). Thorndike (1973) found these two conditions to prevail in his study of reading in 15 different countries. Obviously, reading aloud is important to the child's development as a reader. If children have missed this experience at home, Dorothy Cohen's

(1968) study found that second graders who heard a story every day were significantly ahead of their control groups in reading vocabulary and reading comprehension (pp. 209-213). Finally, Judy Sostarich (1974) found that the influence of reading aloud to children at an early age still made a difference between active and non-active readers at sixth grade (p. 137). The story hour is essential for the development of readers.

In an interview, one excellent primary teacher, Kristen Kerstetter, stressed the importance of sharing many books with children:

> I read to my children a lot—a whole lot! I'll read anywhere from one to three stories at a time. Sometimes I'll reread a favorite story twice. And I read four to five times a day. I read to the whole group, to small groups of four or five children, and to individual children. While I'm reading to the group I'll encourage them to join in on the refrains. With individuals I may point to words, talk about what a word is. Sometimes I'll frame a word with my hand or put it on the board. I put songs, poems, and refrains on chart paper so children will try to read them by themselves. And I'll read stories over and over again, just the way children hear bedtime stories. It's not unusual for me to read a book twenty times in one month! (Hepler, 1982a, pp. 2-3).

Children who have been read to both at home and school learn to read easily and naturally. Don Holdaway has stressed the importance of learning to read from familiar texts such as *The Farmer in the Dell* or *The Gingerbread Man* (Holdaway, 1979, p. 67). Moira McKenzie (1977) has done much research on the way children "take on a story," approximating the text until the child finally "reads it" correctly (p. 8). Such stories have to be predictable such as Pat Hutchins' book, *Titch* (1971), or have well known refrains as in Bill Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* (1970), or repetitive or cumulative patterns as in Langstaff's *Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go* (1974) or Tolstoy's *The Great Big Enormous Turnip* (1968). Children love to read the traditional tales such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* or the familiar nursery rhymes such as "Hickory Dickory Dock" or "Humpty Dumpty." Yes, we do have teachers teaching beginning reading from favorite books in the first grade. It is quite possible to teach reading through literature without using basal texts.

Besides beginning with stories, literature should be a part of all reading programs. A literature-based program must provide time for wide reading of fiction for sustained attention to text. Middle grade children can become totally immersed in a plot such as Betsy Byars' *The Pinballs* (1977)—a kind of attention that they do not give to reading informational books or short stories in basal readers. This is the kind of reading, even rereading, of favorite books that Margaret Clark (1976) found to be characteristic of her avid readers (p. 103). Such wide reading is essential for the development of fluency in reading, but more importantly it helps children love reading. Compare the usual one or two books a month read by children in basal reading programs to the average of 45 books read by each of the middle grade children in Hepler's (1982b) year-long study of children's reading patterns (p. 263). Imagine keeping the child who read 122 books that year confined to the usual two basal readers a year!

Side by side with wide reading or free choice reading must go in-depth reading. This is when children begin to develop some critical reading skills and discernment for fine writing. One small group of fourth graders read *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt (1975). Half way through the story, they took time to write letters to Winnie Foster advising her on whether she should or should not drink the water that would enable her to live forever. Two girls made dioramas depicting the neat and tidy touch-me-not cottage of Winnie and her family and the interior of the messy but comfortable home of the Tucks. They talked about these contrasts—they discussed Babbitt's use of the music box, the toad, and the wheel as continuing motifs in this gentle fantasy. Britton (1968) maintains that the goal of a literature program should be to read more books with satisfaction and to read books with more satisfaction (p. 8). An in-depth look at a book such as these children were doing with *Tuck Everlasting* will provide greater satisfaction with the book and help children begin the development of literary appreciation.

One of the values of using trade books for in-depth or critical reading is that different groups of children in a class can use different books. This frees the teacher to try new ones according to the background and needs of the class.

Another of Hepler's (1982b) findings was that reading was a social activity; in fact, she refers to the development of a "community of readers" (p. 267). This suggests that one, two, or three children

might want to work together and respond to a book in whatever way that satisfies them—through talk, art, drama, writing—whatever would make that book memorable to them. Certainly the deadly dull required book report will not do this. And sometimes children should not do anything with a book. The sixth grader who brought L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door* (1973) up to his teacher with tears in his eyes and said, "This was a beautiful book," has made his response—all that is necessary for a teacher to know showed in his eyes; he is involved in his reading.

Finally, I suggest that with the numbers of excellent informational books available today, children should be encouraged to use literature across the curriculum. I can think of one sixth grade group that studied the Middle Ages. Their teacher brought wonderful books into their classroom, including David Macaulay's *Cathedral* (1973) which details the intricate step by step process of building one; Joe Lasker's *Merry Ever After* (1976) that contrasts two medieval weddings, one between a nobleman's son and a rich merchant's daughter, and one between a blacksmith's daughter and a plowman's son. The teacher also read aloud *Door in the Wall* (DeAngeli, 1949) and *Adam of the Road* (Gray, 1942). They concluded their study with an authentic St. Giles Fair.

Opposition

The kind of literature based reading program that I am suggesting will meet with opposition from a variety of sources. There will be walls to tear down before we can free children to read.

Parents who buy the latest inventions for their kitchen still want a reading program identical to the one they had. Many still think the way to teach reading is to start with the alphabet, move to phonics, and then to texts. Unfortunately there still are professional educators who promote this approach.

Administrators who have been so busy selling schools, passing the levies, and busing children that they haven't had time to keep up with the latest research on children's learning will be frightened to try a "new" approach to reading. Their reputations rest on test scores, not whether children *become* readers.

Textbook publishers will fight such an approach as they fought individualized reading. Or they will use the most recent research on the importance of teaching with literature, obtain permission to put the first seven pages of *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952) in their books, give seven pages of instruction and questions on how to use this selection, and then proudly advertise a literature-based reading program. Anyone who has ever attended a textbook exhibit at IRA or NCTE will never doubt that the textbook publishers have a huge control over the way reading is taught in this country.

Some *literature purists* will prefer not to have literature mixed in with reading. They rightly fear that guidebooks may be developed which could destroy some stories. They worry that the same kind of drill on phonics and isolated words that is a part of basal systems may be used with literature. However, the persons who are advocating the use of literature-based reading programs are suggesting that when real books and meaningful stories are used such drill is unnecessary.

Commitment

A literature-based reading program would require a commitment on the part of administrators, teachers, and librarians. This is not an easy way to teach, but if you truly want children to become readers, it seems the only way to teach. Certainly the teachers who have tried it would say it is much more challenging and interesting.

Such a program would require a commitment on the part of trade book publishers, also. I think we have done a superb job of publishing picture books for all ages, infants on up. While some of the easy reading books are as stilted as some of the primers, many are as good as Lobel's *Frog and Toad* (1970, 1971, 1976, 1979) series. The no man's land in publishing as far as I'm concerned are the books for children ages 7 to 12. Book after book that I pick up recommends for ages "12 and up" on the fly leaf. But in most instances the 12-year-old who can read it is already a reader. We need many more books that will take children into reading. We need more stories like those of Beverly Cleary's — episodic, predictable from an adult viewpoint but not from an 8-year-old's, and addictive as potato chips. I can't tell you how many first and second grade teachers ask me for chapter books to read aloud. If children are to become readers, they need many easy books in which to practice their new found reading abilities. And they need time in school to enjoy reading.

It lies within the power of every teacher and librarian to give children a rich experience with literature. We must do more than just teach them to read. We must help them to become readers, to find a lifetime of pleasure in reading good books.

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.
(William Blake)

References

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The uses of enchantment.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976.

Britton, James. Response to Literature. In James R. Squire (Ed.), *The Dartmouth seminar papers: Response to literature.* Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

Chukovsky, Kornei. *From two to five.* (Translated by Miriam Morton.) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.

Clark, Margaret M. *Young fluent readers.* London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976.

Cohen, Dorothy. The effect of literature on vocabulary and reading achievement. *Elementary English,* February 1968, *45,* 209-213, 217.

Durkin, Dolores. Children who read before grade one. *The Reading Teacher,* January, 1961, *14,* 163-166.

Frankel, Victor. *Man's search for meaning.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.

Hepler, Susan (Ed.). *The best of the web.* Columbus, Ohio: Center for Reading, Language Arts and Children's Literature, College of Education, The Ohio State University, 1982. (a)

Hepler, Susan. Patterns of response to literature: A one-year study of a fifth and sixth grade classroom. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1982. (b)

Hickman, Janet G. Response to literature in a school environment, Grades K-5. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1979.

Holdaway, Don. *The foundations of literacy.* New York: Scholastic, 1979.

Hunter, Mollie. If you can read. Part II. *The Horn Book Magazine,* August 1978, *54,* 431-437.

Koeller, Shirley. 25 years advocating children's literature in the reading program. *The Reading Teacher,* February, 1981, *34,* 552-556.

Ley, Terry. Getting kids into books: The importance of individualized reading. *Media & Methods,* March 1979, *15,* 224.

McKenzie, Moira. *Becoming a reader.* London: Centre for Language in Primary Education, Ilea Learning Materials Service, 1977.

Schell, Jonathan. *The fate of the earth.* New York: Knopf, 1982.

Smith, Frank. *Understanding reading: A psycholinguistic analysis of reading and learning to read.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

Sostarich, Judith M. A study of reading behavior of sixth graders: Comparison of active and other readers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1974.

Thorndike, Robert Ladd. *Reading comprehension, education in 15 countries: An empirical study,* Vol. 3, International Studies in Education. New York: Holsted-Wiley, 1973.

Children's Books

Babbitt, Natalie. *Tuck everlasting.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975.

Byars, Betsy. *The Pinballs.* New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Coerr, Eleanor. *Sadako and the thousand paper cranes.* New York: Putnam, 1977.

DeAngeli, Marguerite. *Door in the wall.* New York: Doubleday, 1949.

Frost, Robert. *You come too.* (Introduction by Hyde Cox.) New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959.

Galdone, Paul. *The gingerbread man.* New York: Seabury, 1975.

Gray, Elizabeth Janet. *Adam of the road.* New York: Viking Press, 1942.

Hall, Donald. *Ox-cart man.* Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

Hunter, Mollie. *A stranger came ashore.* New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Hutchins, Pat. *Titch.* New York: Macmillan, 1971.

Langstaff, John. *Oh, a-hunting we will go.* (Illustrated by Nancy Winslow Parker.) New York: Atheneum, 1974.

Lasker, Joe. *Merry ever after.* New York: Viking Press, 1976.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *A wind in the door.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973.

Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and toad are friends.* New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and toad together.* Harper, 1971.

Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and toad all year.* Harper, 1976.

Lobel, Arnold. *Days with frog and toad.* Harper, 1979.

Macaulay, David. *Cathedral.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

Magorian, Michelle. *Good night Mr. Tom.* New York: Harper, 1981.

Martin, Bill, Jr. *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?* (Illustrated by Eric Carle.) New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Shulevitz, Uri. *Dawn.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1974.

Siegal, Aranka. *Upon the head of the goat.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981.

Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of thunder, hear my cry.* New York: The Dial Press, 1976.

Tolstoy, Alexei. *The great big enormous turnip.* (Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury.) New York: Franklin Watts, 1968.

Uchida, Yoshiko. *Journey to Topaz.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.

White, E. B. *Charlotte's web.* New York: Harper and Row, 1952.

Wildsmith, Brian. *Brian Wildsmith's Mother Goose.* New York: Franklin Watts, 1965.

Willard, Nancy. *A visit to William Blake's inn.* (Illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen.) New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981.

Zuromskis, Diane. *The farmer in the dell.* Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1978.

Arnold Lobel

Birthdays and Beginnings

[The article that follows is a transcription of Arnold Lobel's remarks at the Ohio State University Conference on Children's Literature. The "today" referred to is the date of the presentation which, happily, coincided with the speaker's birthday.—Ed.]

Exactly 49 years ago yesterday in North Hollywood, California, my mother was jolted and quite frightened by an earthquake of considerable severity; and exactly 49 years ago today, I came into the world, and I have no doubt that as I came into the world I was still shaking. Now the '30s was a big time for child superstars, as we know, with Temple and Rooney and Garland. Obviously, fate, in dropping me down at that particular locale at that special time, intended for me to join their ranks. But my parents had other ideas. It was the Depression, 1933. They ran out of dough, bundled me up, and sailed me back to Schenectady, New York, that unglamorous little town from whence they had come and where I grew up.

Not letting a good thing go to waste, as I was growing up I told all my little friends that I knew Temple and Rooney and Garland, that they were all my playmates, and that I saw them every day. It was a lie I quickly came to believe myself. That, I think, is how I learned to become an artist. Early on I learned to turn my lies into true self-illusion. I believed, and was able to make others believe—the prerequisite for any successful creative activity.

Arnold Lobel is an award-winning author-illustrator residing in Brooklyn, N.Y.

I don't like birthdays and anniversaries. Everyday life is tense enough these days without stress like that. But they do make me reflective about where one *is* at a particular time, at a particular stage in one's life. And I guess reflecting can have positive aspects. You see where you are, what you are doing. I suppose that's all to the good. I think it will certainly work well for me here because when I talk to groups of people I always try to make that talk come out of my feeling about my life at that particular moment.

I was depressed in Pittsburgh several years ago and I had about 300 people crying and feeling sorry for me. I was happy in Boston last summer and made everybody laugh—not *at* me, *with* me, I hope. You will be relieved that my thoughts on my birthday today lean in the direction of rebirth and hope. Perhaps another self-illusion, but right now, it's rebirth and hope.

One of the unique facets of this terribly odd profession of making books for children is that I find myself dealing a *lot* with rebirth. For each new project is just that, a totally new beginning. Of course my tools have sharpened through the years. My drawing is perhaps better; my texts have become a bit more confident just by doing, just by sitting and working for so long. If you peel potatoes for 21 years you get to be an awfully good potato peeler. The fact is, there are no rules, no methods, no guidelines for the creation of good books for children. I start. I hope for the best. Every book I do is the first book. Every new book is another damn birthday.

That awful question, "Where did you get your ideas, Mr. Lobel?"—and if I may rephrase it here, "Where do you get your beginnings? Where do you get your 'birthdays' for each book?"—is asked so many times by children, and librarians, and cats and dogs. . . . Often I deal with it in anger, thinking it a patronizing question. Often I deal with it in a spirit of serious, instructive investigation as though it would help me find a system for the working of my imagination. But it doesn't. Instead of rambling all over my whole career as I often do, I thought this morning I would deal with the question more specifically by using one particular book and dissecting the various stages in the work of that one book. We can at least get a partial answer to that awful question, an answer that might apply to the gestation of all my books—of anybody's books, perhaps.

Last spring, I knew it was time for me to begin a new project. I wish I could tell you that my creative impulse is to begin with the altruistic need, to bring to children the bounty of my talent. Not so. There was a hole in my schedule, I wanted to have a book out in 1983 so that everybody would remember my name, and I needed the money. These are the ignoble spurs to which my muse responds. Psychologically, it was not a good time for me. Outside of the usual forty-eightish menopausal problems, I had been dealing for some time with an optical malfunction that was driving me bananas and making me quite anxious. I had won an award for a book the previous winter, which delighted me, of course. But, what goes up must come down and by spring I was feeling that "coming down." When I forced myself to my writing chair with my notebook and my pen, I experienced that all too familiar wall of total creative blankness.

It has become harder and harder for me to turn the trick of writing books for children. My childhood, and my children's childhood, moves further and further away in time. As a source of inspiration these things become even more distant. And, curiously, I find I am inhibited by the escalating price of what I know my books are going to cost. If a picture book is going to cost 10 or 12 dollars—well, so be it. But by God, any book I do has to be *worth* 10 or 12 dollars. That adds to the challenge, to the demands of what I want my work to be.

But I can't look at those empty blue lines in my notebook any more, so I turn to my collection of children's books, especially the old ones. Those Victorians seem to help at such times. They seem to be a comfort to me. My favorite has always been Edward Lear, an interesting, amazing artist whose life and work have always haunted me. It is the limericks that I love. And I am sitting in my writing chair and again I succumb to their great haunting charm:

> There was a young lady whose chin
> Resembled the point of a pin.
> So she had it made sharp
> And purchased a harp
> And played several tunes with her chin.[1]

How rich are these comic ideas, yet stated so quickly, briskly, like a laughing breeze!

Fifteen years ago or so, I wrote some limericks of my own for *Humpty Dumpty* magazine. Instead of people I used pigs in order to pull them away from seeming like a Lear imitation. They were awful—quite an embarrassment. But perhaps the whole concept, I thought now, was not such a bad idea for a book. I wondered and I pondered. I'm very compulsive about not repeating myself in my work, and this would be something new, a new direction. Still, I was afraid of writing verse; I haven't done much of it in recent years. But I've been taking singing lessons as a hobby, learning for my own amusement and amazement songs of the 1930s. I have been, for the past few years, mouthing such lyrics as: "I just picked out the cottage/ and it's by a waterfall./There's lilacs for the springtime/and the roses stay till fall./There's 'Welcome' on the doormat/'Home Sweet Home' upon the wall./ I'm sure of everything but you."[2] Charming lyric. And working with these lyrics had made me rather hungry to try my hand at verse again.

I continued to thumb through my old books, this time of the great French illustrator, Grandville, another favorite of mine. I had found a wonderful drawing of a pig in trousers and waistcoat that I had never seen before, and I thought I had seen all of them.

I pondered and pondered some more. Lear had used European geographical locations for his rhymes; I came up with such lovely delicious American names as Duluth, Moline, and Savannah. I thought of a title; I'd take the "lim" out of limericks and call my book *Pigericks*. Catchy. Children would like it. The thing was growing. But was it an idea for a book? Or some sort of malignancy?

I wrote five "pigericks," and I liked them. They had that agreeable combination of comedy and cantankerousness that I have come to believe marks

the best of my work. But only five. Lear had written somewhere around 220 of those things. I thought I had to write 40 in order to make a good, rich picture book. It seemed a high mountain to climb. I concentrated on the idea of not being Lear. He had illustrated each of his poems with a single, wonderful picture. Couldn't I do a succession of small pictures to build up my little narrative, like a movie or a comic strip (two entertainments that were, of course, unknown to Lear)? But I worked on, trying hard not to think too much about the pictures. They were the dessert that would come later. Now it was the rhymes. I was up to 15 before my imagination stopped, cold and dead. It seemed that the book of Pigericks just would not happen.

We took a house near the beach on Long Island for a few weeks during the summer. Our arrival, of course, coincided with a hurricane, forcing us to seek indoor amusements such as browsing in neighborhood antique stores. It was there, in one of those dusty shops, that I received the sign, the totem, the stigmata—whatever it may be called. There, in a dark corner, I found a life size, realistic, cast-in-solid-lead effigy of a large, heavy, gray pig. She was beautiful. She was expensive. And Anita and I both got hernias just getting her out of there. But she was worth it. In a passion I returned to my poems and finished them, hence my positive feelings about life at the moment.

And now for the pictures.[3] Drawing is always, for me, the dessert after the spinach of writing. What you see in a succession of my sketches is my thinking process with a pencil. It involves many, many drawings. I lay tracing paper over a previous sketch and make changes, tracing over; this is how I work. As characters begin to look like themselves, I begin to think about background. (Incidentally, whenever I do a Frog and Toad book, I have a great deal of difficulty drawing Frog and Toad; they have no necks.) I continue with this endless process of putting tracing paper down on top of tracing paper, and literally following the drawing over and over, resketching and resketching and doing it in layers.

With every picture I do, I begin by thinking "What is the theme of this picture? What is this particular picture about?" I do the whole book in sketches. Sometimes at this point I am not happy with some of the drawings, but I must go on because I have 64 pages to design. There comes a certain point after working for a long time with a single drawing when I must continue with my dummy, the pencil dummy that I bring for my editor to pass judgment on. When *Pigericks* was accepted, I went back and I started the drawings all over again.

I have put my pigs, as you will see, in Victorian garb as a kind of tribute to that gentleman who was my inspiration. I hope he comes down to haunt me after the publication day of this book. I've always wanted to meet Edward Lear.

Notes

1. Lear, Edward. *The book of nonsense*. New York: Crowell, 1918.
2. From the song, "I'm Sure of Everything But You" by Charles O'Flynn, George W. Meyer, and Pete Wendling, written in 1932.
3. Slides were shown here.—Ed.

tip

Katherine Paterson

The Aim of the Writer Who Writes for Children

It is always interesting to me that even those of us who know more about children's books than most people are still trying to define what we mean by "children's literature." What makes a book a "children's book?" Some books, we may say, are easy to categorize. A picture book, for example, is obviously a children's book. But it ain't necessarily so. As I was translating that most Japanese of all Japanese stories, *The Crane Wife* (Yagawa, 1981), and getting lost in the allegorical depths of that tale, I couldn't help but wonder what the picture book crowd was going to make of it. And I can't help but wonder, though of course I'll never know, if one thing that kept *Outside Over There* (Sendak, 1981) from winning a Caldecott was that committee members weren't absolutely sure if it was a children's book. Whenever you get a book which is a work of art, and which, therefore, appeals to a wide spectrum of readers, the question of whether or not it is truly a children's book is apt to arise. "Yes, but will the children like it?" Of course the answer is that some will and some won't—the child reader being no more of an amorphous entity than the adult reader.

When asked, "What is a children's book?" Ann Durrell is said to have replied: "Anything I publish." Which is, if you'll pardon the expression, "the bottom line." A book starts out as a children's book because it is published and marketed by that particular division of the company that does children's books. But a book becomes a children's book when succeeding generations of young readers claim it for themselves. Thus, *The Yearling* (Rawlings, 1938) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), both Pulitzer novels for adults, are now in a very real sense children's books, which does not, in my mind, diminish them in the least.

But it is not the reader's point of view that I want to present here, nor that of the publisher. As one who writes books for children, the question I want to discuss is one of aim—the aim of the writer who writes for children. In referring to aim, I do not mean aim as goal or target in terms of trying to hit someone. I am not chasing children about with a weapon. What I'm talking about is my aim, my intention. What in the world am I trying to do?

A number of years ago I knew a young man who was allowing his hard-working wife to support him financially and care for him body and soul while he painted. I asked him once how he had come to be a painter, since he had already told me he'd never painted as a child and had never had any lessons. "Well," he said "I started out to be a writer, but nothing I wrote ever sold. I had to have some way of expressing myself, so I decided to become a painter."

I would like to tell you that this young man who indulged his desire to express himself at the expense of his long-suffering wife was a bad painter. Actually, one of his paintings, an interesting geometrical study in tones of blue, hangs at this moment on my kitchen wall. I like the picture very much. It seems to me more the expression of an elegant mathematical problem than the self-expres-

*Katherine Paterson is an award-winning author, residing in Norfolk, Virginia.**© 1982 by Katherine Paterson.*

sion of a selfish young man. He is now, I understand, a successful contemporary painter, supporting, I can only hope, the same wife who took care of him for so long, defying all my dire predictions. His work, if I may judge (and I may not but I will anyway), was better than he was.

There is something in me that believes selfish souls should be condemned to niggling little works, but alas, or perhaps I should say, hooray, it doesn't always work out that way. Life is not fair. Gifts are often lavished on the apparently undeserving and withheld from the pure in heart. The young lout with no higher aim than expressing himself for fun and profit turns out to have a gift for art. Now my age and my Calvinistic upbringing make me rush to judgment against people young or old who feel they have a right to bulldoze other human beings in the hot pursuit of self-expression, but the presence of a genuine gift, even in a person I don't care for, slows me down a bit.

Flannery O'Connor (1961, p. 81) reports that when she was asked by a college student, "Miss O'Connor, why do you write?" she replied, "Because I am good at it," and sensed the general disapproval of the audience at what was not regarded as a very high-minded answer. O'Connor goes on to say it was the only legitimate answer. "There is no excuse for anyone to write fiction for public consumption unless he has been called to do so by the presence of a gift. It is the nature of fiction not to be good for much unless it is good in itself."

I had a rather painful reaction last year after the Newbery announcement. Almost everyone who congratulated me went on to ask: "*Now* what are you going to do?" The implication seemed to be that I had done children's books and ought to be moving on. I began to feel that the medal was becoming a fiery sword expelling me from the garden and barring my return. I wanted to cry out to somebody: "Why do I have to stop doing what I most want to do?"

If my aim as a writer had been to gain recognition or to win a prize, well, then, those aims had been reached, and I could and should go on to something else; but my aim, like that of most writers of fiction, is to tell a story. My gift seems to be that I am one of those fortunate people who can, if she works hard at it, uncover a story that children will enjoy.

There is as much loose talk these days about creativity as there is about self-expression. But those of us who are mortal do not create *ex nihilo*—out of nothing—any more than we simply express ourselves. We seek, in Madeleine L'Engle's phrase, to "serve the work" (1980, p. 23).

Norman Mailer puts it differently, but I think he is talking about the same thing when he says:

"A book takes on its own life in the writing. It becomes a creature to you after a while. One feels a bit like a master who's got a fine animal. Very often I'll feel a certain shame for what I've done with a novel. . . . Almost as if the novel did not really belong to me, as if it was something raised by me like a child. I know what's potentially beautiful in my novel, you see. Very often after I've done the novel I realize that that beauty which I recognize in it is not going to be recognized by the reader. I didn't succeed in bringing it out. It's very odd—it's as though I let the novel down, owed it a duty which I didn't fulfill."

The gift, you see, is possibility. The aim of the writer is, like Michaelangelo's, to chip away at the block of marble to reveal the statue within it.

That is one reason why I am often at a loss to answer questions like: "Why is Maime Trotter fat?" I don't know why Maime Trotter is fat or why she is semi-illiterate or why she isn't a good housekeeper. That's the way she was when I first met her. One of the reasons I must rewrite a book, some portions of it many times, is because the story is teaching me slowly what it is about and who its people are. Occasionally, as in the case of Maime Trotter, they arrive full grown and I can see them at once. But, usually, I see through a glass darkly and must write patiently day after day, trying to find my way to the story that wants to be told and the people who are to be revealed in its telling.

It is a humbling experience to be at the service of a work. It reminds me of the feeling I remember when holding my firstborn, who was a tiny, beautiful baby. I said to myself when I was going through that proverbial second day low in the hospital: "Here he is, perfect, and I'm going to ruin him." Well, of course, that was a delusion of grandeur on my part. I have had some power over his life, but not really so much as I feared. He was much too intelligent and humorous and strong-willed to be ruined by the likes of me. On the other hand, it would be silly to say that stories cannot be ruined by writers; they can be and have been. But the marvelous thing to behold in your own work or the work of other writers is the story that overcomes the weakness of the writer. My favorite example of this is *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1910) where the sheer power of the story and the magic of that garden

cut through all the Victorian gingerbread. Or Dickens. I recently read *Bleak House* (1972) and wished, on a number of occasions, I could have loaned dear Charles my editor. But, oh, oh, by the time I finished, how I wished Charles could pass on to me a thimbleful of his artistry. If only I could paint my world a fraction as vividly as he painted his.

Story tellers and artists are very unsatisfactory creatures to the bulk of society. The more faithful they are to serving the work they have been given, the less receptive they are to advice on how the world is to be served by this work. I am blessed in that I have an editor who likes what I do, who never tries to tell me how to do my job, but who also never hesitates to point out those instances when it appears to her I have not done what I set out to do. She has never asked me to write a different story, but she has often suggested that this or that detail or incident or even entire chapters do not seem to be true to the work. I know that what she wants is not some glorious book in her imagination, but *this* book, written as well and as faithfully to its story as I can possibly make it.

"The marvelous thing to behold . . . is the story that overcomes the weakness of the writer."

When I was trying in *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) to go from a cry of pain to a fully realized story and having difficulties in the process, she asked me: "What is this story about? Is it a story about death or a story about friendship?" Up until that moment I had assumed it was a story about death, but her question made me realize that *Bridge* wasn't, in fact, a story about death. It was a story about friendship, and although all mortal friendships come to an end, death is not always the most painful ending. "This is a story about friendship," I answered, feeling a bit like Buddha under the Bo tree. "I think you're right," she said. "Now go back and write it that way."

I had had so much flack about the ending of *Jacob Have I Loved*, (1980), Newbery seal notwithstanding, that I finally asked Paul Heins point blank about it. "Well," he said, "many people have trouble with your ending because they read *Jacob* as a quest for self-knowledge. If that is the story, perhaps it should end when Louise leaves the island. But," he went on, "it's not a story about self-knowledge, it is a story of reconciliation, so it must come full circle."

Paul Heins is right. It is a story of reconciliation. In my mind you do not title a book *Jacob Have I Loved*, even ironically, if you cannot somehow come to love Jacob before it is over. I know Paul and I are right about what the story intended. I must ask myself: If I had served the work more faithfully could I have made that intention clearer to others? Maybe so. Maybe not. The book is out of my hands now. It is not like a play with tryouts in Norfolk and New Haven and frantic rewritings right up to and sometimes well after opening night. The book must stand as it is. I leave it to the mercy of the reader.

I realize my emphasis has been on the aim of the writer, and I have said very little about writing for children. But it seems important to me to make this emphasis because to borrow and bend Flannery O'Connor: If a children's book is not good in itself, it's not going to be good for children either. Most of us have a concern for some child or some group of children. We have, at least I know I have, certain beliefs as to what might be good for that child and what might be damaging. We are prepared to go to considerable trouble to protect our children from that which we think might injure them and to try to obtain those things which we think will be good for them.

Because people are eager to have things which will help their children, they say to someone who writes for children: Please write a story about such and such. Children need a story like that. I got a very poignant letter from a father this month asking me to write a story about children of divorce in which the father was not a villain. Another letter came from a child who begged me to write a story about a fat boy who goes to a new school and nobody likes him at first and "dedicate it to me" — and he spelled out his name.

After I had written *The Sign of the Chrysanthemum* (1973), one of my good friends who is an ardent feminist asked me to make my next book about a girl, a strong person who overcomes many odds, because, she said, her daughter needed such a book. I hadn't written but one other novel at the time, and I thought I could do just that, write a book about a strong girl who overcomes many odds and who would serve as a role model for my friend's daughter and maybe my own two daughters as well. It started out all right, but the more I listened to the story, the more I realized that my strong girl was also selfish and vain and would be brought low by her flaws as well as exalted by her strengths. She turned, you see, in the course of the story, into a human being, set in a specific time in history and in an actual geographical location, both of

which conspired against her budding feminism. By the time I'd finished, I thought I'd written a pretty good story, but I knew my friend was going to be sadly disappointed.

I am sure I am not the only writer who can't understand sometimes what a reviewer means, and I think this is often because a writer can no more separate setting, characterization, plot, and theme in her own books than a mother, looking at a beloved child, breaks him down into bone structure, muscular system, psychological development, etc. Now, of course, there are occasions when some part of the child demands particular attention. I've been asked to direct my attention to vast expanses of adolescent skin lately. But even while I'm obediently looking at the skin, there is a voice coming out from under it, crying: "Why me? Why not John? Why do I always get zits just before a party? Never John." And I'm not even allowed to study the skin objectively and in peace.

One review I had trouble understanding was for *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (1978). Let me just share the final paragraph. "It's not that *The Great Gilly Hopkins* isn't a good read, it's just that it would have been a better story without mixing up race relations, learning disabilities, the important relationships between young and old, *and* a terrific young girl who gamely comes to terms with her status as a foster child" (Fireside, 1978). Huh? Put that way, it sounded as though I'd tried to take nearly every social problem in America and cram them into one story. No one but a fool would do that, and I spend a lot of time assuring myself that I am not a fool. So what had I done wrong? What had I done to give this obviously intelligent reader the idea that I intended to write the higgelty-piggelty story she was describing?

At last I realized what had happened. I had set the story in Takoma Park, Maryland—or a place strangely like Takoma Park. Unlike most American communities, Takoma Park is wildly heterogeneous. We lived across the street from an upper middle class black couple. On either side of us were highly educated white couples, one household the more traditional male and female combination, the other entirely male. We were diagonally across the street from a black family with two children of their own and a changing cast of foster children, just up from a retired white couple who were struggling to get by on a fixed income, around the corner from an elderly handicapped widow, down the street from a Roman Catholic family with 13 children. If I keep going, the neighborhood will present every sociological configuration and problem in our country, including: families struggling against mental illness, recent immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and Appalachia, communes, Jehovah's Witnesses, wealthy young swingers, drug addicts, upper class alcoholics, welfare recipients of various races, and even a couple of children's writers. What I had done was set my story in a toned down version of an actual community, but even toned down, it seemed unbelievable to a sophisticated reviewer for *The New York Times*. Gilly was dealing with people who live in such a variegated community, not with an assortment of social issues. But I had failed to make that community real to at least one reader.

"I write out of my own needs."

I once heard a writer express anger toward an editor who had complained that she could not tell where the writer's story was taking place. The writer said, "It didn't matter where the story was taking place. It could have taken place *anywhere*." I cannot believe that particular writer believed what she was saying. She is too fine a writer. She knows as well as I do that a story can no more take place *anywhere* than a human being can exist *nowhere*. One of the most ancient heresies of the Christian faith is gnosticism. The Gnostics distrusted matter. They believed that matter was evil and only pure spirit was good. Gnosticism not only makes for bad religion, it makes for terrible fiction. The world of the story must be created or recreated in concrete detail. Matter matters, and part of the process of uncovering a story lies in discovering the appearance, feel, smells, sounds, and even the tastes of the world in which it unfolds.

One reason *Jacob Have I Loved* was so long in the writing was because for months I did not know where the story was taking place. Once I knew *where*, the setting itself was so much a part of the plot and had so much to do with developing the characters that I could not possibly separate out the elements. For example, in my first vague feelers toward the story I had known that theology (either good or bad) was going to have a place in the story. When I found the setting—islands in the Chesapeake Bay—I found communities that were more closely tied to religious commitment than even I would have thought existed in America today. There was no need to hunt about for metaphors—the setting lavished them upon me—which, indeed, I believe any setting will, if the writer will look closely enough, and if it is the proper world for the story which is being told.

Often people interested both in children and in books will want to tell a writer about setting, as though a story could be switched from one place to another like a traveling circus. Back when I had written only historical fiction set in Japan, adults would say to me: "You shouldn't set your stories in Japan. Children are not going to read them. They will only read books about children just like themselves. Children have to be able to immediately identify with the characters in a book." I would bite my tongue not to remind them that I didn't know a single American child who was a timid barnyard pig. I was convinced then, and am still convinced, that there are plenty of American children adventurous enough imaginatively to read about characters who are not carbon copies of themselves. My task is to make what might be an exotic world so real that the reader will be able to enter it, to see and smell and hear and taste it. A historical novel or a novel set in a distant or unknown world is not primarily an opportunity to teach the reader about another culture. It is a story, and there is no place in a story for deliberate didacticism. What the writer must do is supply those concrete details that will make this world real to the reader and thus bring this story to life. I went to Deal Island one day primarily to sniff, because Virginia had complained that she couldn't quite smell Rass Island.

The very language of the book, the metaphors, must belong to the world of the story. Louise's language is the language of the water which she loves and of the Bible which she thinks she has rejected, but which is as much a part of her blood as the bay itself. Takiko, a musician living on another island in another age, speaks a different language:

"The daughter of a samurai does not cry out in childbirth. Within her head Takiko laughed at the injunction. It was as though her very body was the *koto* of a god whose powerful hand struck a chord so fierce that for the wild moment she became the storm music of the sea. Then throbbing, ebbing, the great wave would pass over her, and she would drift on the surface of the water, the sun warm upon her face until another stroke upon the strings.

"*I am mixing it all up.* She smiled. *I am music and storm and strings. I am Izanami as She brooded over Creation*" (Paterson, 1974, p. 169).

Now some critics would contend that a scene in which the central character is obviously giving birth to a baby has no place in a children's book. By using this example, I am driven toward the question I have been avoiding. What is the difference between writing for children and adults, if all you care about is the story itself.

In Connecticut last January, a librarian asked me if I were conscious of an audience as I write—as you see, I'm not. I'm conscious of story. But there are two points at which the audience comes into sight, though not, perhaps, as you might wish. In the first place, although a story seems to choose me rather than vice versa, still, intellectually, I know there is psychological method in this seeming madness. When you see a repetition of behavior, no matter how irrational that behavior might appear in isolation, you can bet there's a reason for it. Why do I keep writing stories about children and young people who are orphaned or otherwise isolated or estranged? It's because I have within myself a lonely, frightened child who keeps demanding my comfort. I have a rejected child, a jealous and jilted adolescent inside who demands, if not revenge, a certain degree of satisfaction. I am sure it is she, or should I say they, who keep demanding that I write for them.

I'm often asked why I don't write for adults, and since I'm not quite sure myself, I give a variety of answers with varying degrees of veracity. I have been known to say it's because I find adultery a rather boring subject. But that can't be the whole truth. Recently at a literary function a stranger came up and said, "Pardon me, but aren't you Anne Tyler?" "No," I answered immediately, "but I wish I were." Of course, I don't really wish I were Anne Tyler. I'd have to be married to a psychiatrist and live in Baltimore. I'd rather be Lin and John and David and Mary Paterson's mother and be married to a preacher in Norfolk. But if I could be who I am and write like Anne Tyler or Mary Lee Settle or Shirley Hazzard or Eudora Welty or Caroline Gordon or Flannery O'Connor . . . but I can't. That is not my gift. So I said to the lady who asked if I were Anne Tyler, "I'm Katherine Paterson." And she, bless her, said, "Oh, of course, that's why you look familiar. You're my daughter's favorite writer." And I didn't really mind not being Anne Tyler. I'm deeply honored to be her daughter's Anne Tyler. I am incapable of composing a symphonic masterpiece like Mary Lee Settle's *Bloodtie* (1977), but I can write a simple melody like *Bridge to Terabithia*, and I'm grateful that I can.

I seem to be in tune with the questions my children and their friends are asking. Is there any chance that human beings can learn to love one another? Will the world last long enough for me to

grow up in it? What if I die? And the question they ask, but would never formulate this way, the ancient question of the psalmist as he gazed at stars millions of light years away: "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Not all children are interested in these questions, I know, but enough seem to be that the publishers feel it is worthwhile to keep printing my simple melodies drawn from these haunting themes.

But any worthy reasons I might put forth are overbalanced by the personal one. I write out of my own needs. The woman in me is nearly overwhelmed by the abundance she has been given. Further growth of my soul will, I do not doubt, expose great areas of need of which I am not currently aware. Someday I may need to write quite different books. But this is not the time or place to speculate on my work or on my psyche.

If, as I say, my first audience is my own young self, the time comes when I must be concerned with the audience outside myself. After the story is written down (which may take more than one draft; it certainly takes many rewritings of certain parts of the story); after, as I see it, the idea has become a recognizable story on paper, I must turn my efforts from serving the story—art for art's sake, as it were—to how best this story can be shared. I want to tell this story in such a way as to enlist the imaginative cooperation of the intended reader. This reader will be young, will have less experience of life than I, and will probably not have traveled to the place where the story takes place. I am not going to change the intent of this story to try to please her, but I am going to do everything in my power to make the story live for her, to make it dramatically clear to her. She may not like how the story ends, but I want her to see that this ending is the inevitable one. I want her to want to keep reading, to wonder with a pounding heart how it will all come out; and then, when she comes to the final page, I want her to say: "Of course! It had to be. No other ending was possible. Why didn't I realize it all along?" No one could fault me for wanting too little.

Up to this point I have jealously guarded my story, regarding it as so fragile that it will shatter like a dandelion puff if another soul breathes in its direction. But now my concern is not simply the story itself but the sharing of it. I need other eyes and intellects to read it and tell me to what extent I have succeeded or failed.

My husband is the first editor. I used to hand over the manuscript more out of courtesy than anything else, and he would tell me where I had failed the story, and I would say politely, "Thank you for your opinion," and say to myself, "What does he know?" However, when I would later send the revised story to Virginia, and she would question me about exactly the same points, I began to realize I was blessed with two good editors, and I would be a fool not to listen.

I have also in the case of several of the books read them aloud to one or more of my children. This is not because I think my children can give me the quality of help that my husband or editor or a friend like Gene Namovicz can. Children, even clever ones like mine, tend to say "I love it"or "I don't like it" without being able to articulate exactly what it is that makes them love or dislike a story. In the very act of reading aloud, however, my ear picks out flaws in the music of the book. Each book has its own music, and reading aloud is the best way I know to hear when you have hit the wrong note or lost the proper rhythm. It is also helpful because, even if the children are not as articulate as the adult critics, they are less polite. A snore or a "Huh?" or a getting up and going to the refrigerator can be easily understood by the dullest of writers.

"My task," says Joseph Conrad, "which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you *see*. That — and no more: and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand—and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask" (1898, Preface).

My task, my aim as an author who writes for children, is not so different. My aim is to engage young readers in the life of a story which came out of me but which is not mine, but ours. I don't just want a young reader's time or attention, I want his life. I want his senses, his imagination, his intellect, his emotions, and all the experiences he has known breathing life into the words upon the page. It doesn't matter how high my aim or how polished my craft. I know that without the efforts of my reader, I have accomplished nothing. The answer to the old puzzle about the tree falling in the unpopulated wilderness is that it makes no noise. I have not written a book for children unless the book is brought to life by the child who reads it. It is a cooperative venture. My aim is to do my part so well that the young reader will delight to join me as coauthor. My hope (for there are no

guarantees) is that children in succeeding generations will claim this story as their own.

References

Burnett, Frances H. *The secret garden.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1910.

Conrad, Joseph. *The nigger of the narcissus.* London: Heinemann, 1898.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak house.* New York: Dutton, 1972.

Fireside, Byrna J. Two orphans without mothers. *New York Times,* April 3, 1978.

Lee, Harper, *To kill a mockingbird.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1960.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *Walking on water.* Wheaton, Ill.: Shaw, 1980.

O'Connor, Flannery. *Mystery and manners.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1961.

Paterson, Katherine. *The sign of the chrysanthemum.* New York: Crowell, 1973.

Paterson, Katherine. *Of nightingales that weep.* New York: Crowell, 1974.

Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia.* New York: Crowell, 1977.

Paterson, Katherine. *The great Gilly Hopkins.* New York: Crowell, 1978.

Paterson, Katherine. *Jacob have I loved.* New York: Crowell, 1980.

Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnan. *The Yearling.* New York: Scribner's, 1938.

Sendak, Maurice. *Outside over there.* New York: Harper, 1981.

Settle, Mary Lee. *Bloodtie.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

Yagawa, Sumiko. *The Crane Wife.* (K. Paterson, trans.) New York: Morrow, 1981.

tip

Madeleine L'Engle

Subject to Change without Notice

This has been a century of change, which shows no sign of slowing down. We tend to have accepted the technological changes fairly well; we're not like the old woman who announced, "If God had wanted us to fly, he wouldn't have created trains." We're grateful for the advances of medicine. I love the IBM Selectric on which I set down these thoughts. The outer changes are very visible and we've managed to keep up with them fairly well. But we haven't changed inwardly enough to keep up with the changes we've made outwardly, and this is creating problems we are just beginning to recognize.

One of the problems which comes from this being out of step with our inner and outer selves affects children's books directly. A reaction to change is the current acceleration of censorship in books, and of actual book-burnings. Someone sent me a newspaper clipping with a list of 10 books, marketed both for adults and children, which were being removed from the shelves of a library because of pornography. One of the 10 was my book, *A Wind in the Door* (1973). I am still totally baffled. The science which underlies the story is cellular biology, and cellular biology is here to stay. Is it so frightening that it can be labeled pornographic?

We fight change by labeling things, and by being zealous about our labels. But, as Bertrand Russell reminds us, "Zeal is a bad mark for a cause. Nobody has any zeal about arithmetic. It is not the vaccinationists but the anti-vaccinationists who generate zeal. People are zealous for a cause when they are not quite positive that it is true." When I am most defensive about something, zealously trying to prove I am right, it is a clear warning to me to step back and examine whatever it is I am zealous about.

Does it threaten my comfortable rut? Am I, for some reason, afraid of it? That's usually behind blind zealousness. Why was the medical profession so threatened when Semmelweis pointed out that it might be a good idea if doctors, cutting up a cadaver, washed their hands before going to deliver the baby of a woman in labor? It is hard for us to understand that Semmelweis's colleagues were so terrified by this radical, if eminently sensible suggestion, they fought it bitterly.

I don't happen to like all of the books which are being published today for young people, but that is my privilege; we have never been required to like everything. But it is not my privilege to decide that a book should be burned. Book burning bespeaks a kind of terror which precludes reason or compassion.

A young friend of mine has a 12-year-old boy who has one of the dreadful, wasting diseases which is going to kill him in a few years. He is a beautiful, bright child. She has no husband, and caring for and supporting her son as the illness takes a stronger and stronger grip on him is a heavy burden. She told me she had gone to see *On Golden Pond* and loved it, and she would take Mark to see it if it weren't for the language. I said, "Please don't try to protect Mark this way. He's

Madeleine L'Engle is an award-winning author, residing in New York City.

12 years old. He's already heard all the words from other kids. What the picture has to say is a message of hope in the face of death; the language is nothing which will shock your son; he probably won't even notice it." I hope I was right. I don't know. At least I wasn't zealous.

A good many years ago my husband and our son, then about 10 years old, were sitting in the kitchen drinking tea and arguing about ice hockey. It was a passionate argument, and finally our son said, "But Daddy, you don't understand." And my reasonable husband said, "It's not that I don't understand, Bion. It's simply that I don't agree with you." To which Bion replied, "If you don't agree with me, you don't understand."

That's true of most of us, but it takes a child to admit it.

My entire life has been full of change. I remember when my parents got their first radio. We used to go to Europe by ship, and now we fly. Jet lag is still hard on the human body; it really does take a day for every hour we lose or gain. There was even more change for my mother, who moved from candle light to lamp light to gas light to electricity; from a horse drawn buggy to a train to a car to a jet plane, and who saw men walk on the moon—from riding a horse to traveling in space all in one lifetime. And it has been a century of war. My father was gassed in the First World War, and mustard gas doesn't kill outright, it just goes on eating the lungs, so that my father died by inches, until I was nearly 18. So I was fearful of war. When Mussolini marched into Abyssinia, I knew this was the beginning of the Second World War. There has been one war or another ever since. We have not done very well in providing our children with a green and peaceful land. We have polluted our air; we do not know how to dispose safely of atomic waste. Unemployment and crime among children and teenagers is one of our greatest problems.

If we are afraid of something, it is best to admit we are afraid. Then it becomes more possible for us to look at it, see it as it is, and perhaps do something about it. What the story teller does is look at the world with all its brokenness and problems, and write a story, for story is where we look for the truth of a matter. I do not believe we need to protect our children, from language they already know, or from the violence of the world, which also they already know. I think we owe it to them to be honest, which does not mean to ram facts down their throats, or to write about what is currently fashionable, but to work out of our own needs, our own concerns. One of our chief concerns today is to try to catch up inwardly with all that assails us outwardly. This involves a willingness to accept change.

When Descartes wrote, "I think, therefore I am," he helped start us on a route where we extolled the intellect above the intuition, and thus created a chasm between the conscious and the creative subconscious mind. Then, and until we burst apart the heart of the atom, scientists were looking for the basic building blocks of the universe; something static, in fact. When I was in school and college, science was cold and arrogant. What it did not already know, it was going to discover shortly; basically, science thought it had it made. The most interesting thing I did in science during my school years was when I took chemistry and blew up the lab. The lab was in an old greenhouse, so there was a great deal of broken glass to clean up. I was not particularly fond of science—not because of blowing up the lab—but because it did not seem interested in open-ended questions.

"Story is where we look for the truth of a matter."

When we split the heart of the atom, science changed. We already knew a little something about the world of the macrocosm; we had a fairly good idea of the enormous size of galaxies; but now we discovered the world of the microcosm, particles as much smaller than we are as the galaxies are larger than we are. And these sub-atomic particles, quanta, have not turned out to be the static building blocks the scientists were looking for. What is marvelous to me is that the great scientists now believe that these miniscule quanta do not exist at all except in relationship to something, and in relation they are changed. Rather than being static, they are in constant movement; as the stars in their courses move in a vast, cosmic dance, so these incredibly small particles are also part of the dance. It is impossible to study them with real scientific objectivity, because to look at something is to change it. One rather fascinating theory which has been around in science fiction for a long time but which is now a serious concern of astrophysicists is that every possible change and play of changes is being enacted out somewhere in the universe. Once, when I was maybe 11, I almost got run down by a car, and I asked myself, "What would happen if I also *did* get run down by that car, and the world is going on without me, with my parents grieving and—and—" That, ahead of its time, was good

quantum mechanics. Parallel universes is a serious theory. It's more than we can cope with, at least with the conscious mind alone. We have to let the creative unconscious surface, and help us out. We have to be subject to change without notice.

If tiny quanta are changed because they are observed, so, too, we are changed by our interrelationships with each other. I am being changed by this time in Columbus; I will never be quite the same again because of it. This kind of change is the essence of story. I began to think about this in earnest because of a small experience which happened in Willimantic, Connecticut, this past month. I was in a pleasant, rambling bookstore, at an autograph party. Toward the end of the afternoon a college student came up to me—Willimantic is right by "Yukon"(U. Conn.), as the University of Connecticut is known. This young man said, "I've been listening to you and I've enjoyed what you've been saying to people. It makes me wonder—I haven't read any of your books because I've heard they're very religious."

At that, all my little red flags of warning unfurled and started waving. "You'd better define that word," I said. "What do you mean by religious? Hitler was very religious. Khomeini is very religious. Communists are very religious. The 'moral majority' is very religious." And I heard myself saying, "My religion is subject to change, without notice."

I felt I had received a great revelation. That is how it should be, I think, with religion, with science. What we know must always be subject to change as we learn new things. In fact, it *has* to change, in order to keep up with all the outer changes which cannot be reversed and which are not going to stop. Galileo's discoveries did nothing whatsoever to change the nature of the universe; they changed only what the religious establishment of his day had decided was the nature of the universe. The discoveries of the quantum physicists have done nothing to change the nature of the universe, either; but they have changed, radically, our way of looking at the universe. There is nothing static. We change each other by simply observing each other. We are all part of something far greater than we can begin to comprehend. What we do makes a difference.

This is something children understand, intuitively, and which we often try to get out of as we grow up, by sniveling and saying, "Oh, I'm too unimportant to matter." No one is too unimportant to matter. What we do here in Columbus may make a difference in a solar system in a galaxy half way across the universe. Fred Hoyle, an astrophysicist who also writes fiction, said, "Insofar as I hold a fixed belief about anything, it is a belief in a total interrelation of all aspects of the universe, large or small."

This interrelationship is part of story. No child is too small or powerless to make a difference. And the differences we make change us, and change those around us. If what I believe is not subject to change without notice, then I am apt to be static, and if I become static, I am apt to become zealous, and seek to defend my position, no matter how unreasonably. That's how book-burners are promulgated.

So, is that all we offer children in our stories? Don't we also have to offer them enduring values? Don't we have a responsibility to the children who are going to read our books? Don't we have a responsibility when we choose a book to read to or give to a child? Of course. But I think of my young friend who was afraid to give her son the values of *On Golden Pond* because of the language, and it makes me hope that we will try to see what is really the meaning in a movie or a book, and not be distracted by something which is not essential.

I am totally against censorship, and yet we cannot avoid it in our own lives entirely, because we have to be discriminating in the books we read ourselves, in the books we buy, in the books we suggest to the children. Discriminating is a word which has changed in this generation, for to most people it now is only a negative word, and means discriminating against one kind of minority or other, those of a different color or language from ours, the old, and, often, the children. But it also has a positive value, because it means that we have the ability to choose, to discern quality from junk, to see the book which is written with integrity and out of the writer's own need, vs. the book which is written because teenage abortion is "in" this year.

We also have a responsibility to look at all that which is changing around us, and to assess which is creative change and which is destructive, and which we can possibly do something about. Suppose someone said to you, "Hey, I've just thought of this terrific invention. Of course, it's going to cost 500,000 lives every year, but everybody else is really going to enjoy it." You'd likely say, "Forget it. We can't spare all those lives. Nothing is worth that price." Yet that is the price which the automobile has cost us, and I'm afraid the automobile is here to stay, and quite a few of us couldn't have come to this conference without it. I had to get to

Newark Airport to catch the plane to Columbus, and it would have been a long trip by horse or bike.

Of course, the inventors of the automobile did not know it was going to cost so heavily in human life. It was an example of what we *know* being way ahead of our wisdom to understand its implications.

It was the desire to *know* of pure science which led us to explore the heart of the atom. Alas, it was the Second World War which accelerated the interest in splitting the atom and provided the enormous funds needed for research and which would not have been available in peace time. Surely if those first atomic scientists in New Mexico had had the slightest idea where their experiments were going to lead, they might well not have exploded that first atom bomb.

"If those tiny subatomic particles exist only in relationship with other particles, so do the rest of us."

But what we already know, we know. We cannot turn our backs on it, or bury our heads in the sand. What we need to do is to try to become wise enough so that our knowledge will serve us and the rest of the human race, not destroy us. How do we teach our children wisdom as well as knowledge? We cannot do it until we are willing to have the courage to try to become ourselves.

We are at one of the world's crossroads right now. The better trodden way is the way of war. I pray that we may have the courage and the wisdom to take the lesser trodden way. The way of peace. Oh, what a difference it will make.

If we are to have peace in the world—and there is still hope—we must have peace in our own hearts, and try to share our peace with those around us. Dean Inge of St. Paul's said "God promised to make you free. He never promised to make you independent."

Does it seem trivial at this moment of crisis to talk about our interdependence with each other, with children, with books? I think not. The small things we do together this weekend may make more difference than we can realize, and in ways we may never understand. If those tiny subatomic particles exist only in relationship with other particles, so do the rest of us. We look at each other and we change each other. I write a book, and it changes me. I read a book, and that, too, changes me. We do not and cannot live in isolation. Much of what changes us we have no control over, such as the polluted air we breathe. But when it comes to books, we can practice discrimination in the positive, creative sense of the word. And discrimination can be the opposite of censorship. Censorship tends to produce the opposite of what it sets out to do. If kids find out that *A Wind in the Door* has been labeled porno, you can bet my sales will go up.

When my kids were middle-aged kids, 9, 11, 13, like all middle-aged kids they wanted to read whatever the adults told them they shouldn't read. Now, since I remembered doing exactly this when I was their age, I did not tell them not to read the books I knew they were reading. What I did was read the books myself, and then we discussed them. A lot of the books had to do with sex, and most of them had a distorted view of sex. It was usually no more than animal rutting, and had little to do with loving or honoring the partner. So we talked about this. I do not believe there is any topic which is in itself taboo; it is how it is handled that makes the difference. The year my girls were reading *The Group* (McCarthy, 1963), we discussed this book, particularly the second chapter, which is a graphic description of a young woman's deflowering. I said to my girls that when the sex act is anatomized in the laboratory, then all sense of love vanishes, and so does glamor, and mystery, and what two people can feel for each other, and if they wanted to read a really good description of illicit love they should try *Anna Karenina* or *Madame Bovary*. You can imagine my delight when I heard my younger daughter on the telephone, parroting my words back to her best friend, as though she thought them up herself.

It was that same year when I received a letter from a librarian in California, much distressed because she had been receiving telephone calls from the parents of the high school students, telling her the kids were passing around *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) for the sex passages. She actually gave me page numbers. I leapt to the bookcase to see which were my sex passages, and they turned out to be the descriptions of tessering.[1] I wrote her back that one can see sexual imagery in almost anything, and I thought this was fairly healthy imagery, and far better for the kids to read than *The Group*.

When my mother was a child, she grew up in a family which read Scripture morning and evening. After the readings the kids would rush for the Bible to read the passages which had been left out; the Bible was, in effect, their dirty book. I was asked if I would write a book for children based on the Book of Genesis. I'm writing a book on Genesis,

but it is not going to be marketed for children. However, I have no doubt that my granddaughters, who are 12 and 13, will read it. And perhaps this fantastic story, which has in it all the elements of the best seller, will give them courage and hope in this frantic age, where change is spinning, almost out of control, and may well go out of control if we don't recognize it, discern what is constructive and what is destructive.

Story does help us to bind our fragmented selves together, does help us to recognize ourselves in all of our terrible and marvelous complexity. Story does help us to forget the plastic model of sterile perfection which we tend to think we "ought" to be, and offers us our fuller, richer, deeper selves. Story affirms that there *are* constants, despite all the change and decay in all around we see. One of the constants is question, and one particular question which is asked by every generation: Who am I?

The Sufi master, Nasrudin, went into a little shop and asked the shopkeeper, "Have you ever seen me before?" "No, never," the shopkeeper replied. "Then," said Nasrudin, "How do you know it's me?"

Story helps us answer that question. As we identify with various characters, we help build ourselves. If we are free to practice discrimination in what we read, we are also free to write our own stories. We may not be able to slow down the accelerating changes in the world around us, but we are free to react to them in our own ways, and our very reacting is going to change not only ourselves, but whatever it is we react to.

There's a story of two caterpillars who were crawling along the ground when a butterfly flew over them. One of the caterpillars said to the other, "You'll never catch me going up on one of those."

I'll go up on a butterfly any day.

And so, I hope, will you.

To write a book, to read a book, is to ride a butterfly. And to ride a butterfly is an act of creativity, an act of hope. So in our own small, but nevertheless desperately important ways, we *can* change change. We are not totally impotent, passive, acted upon. We are participators, actors in the great drama. The great director, Stanislavsky, constantly reminded his students, "There are no small roles. There are only small actors."

We are not small actors. We accept, because we care about children and children's books, that if we are to believe anything in a creative manner, we must stick our necks out; we must take risks. Franz Konig writes:

". . .all human endeavor is beset by risk. Freedom risks its own abuse, thinking risks error, speech risks misunderstanding, faith risks failure, hope risks despair. The risk of life is death. And /the human being/ is /human/ only by virtue of /our/ risks of the future."

Friedrich Dessauer, an atomic physicist, writes that the human being "is a creature who depends entirely on revelation. In all /our/ intellectual endeavor, /we/ should always listen, always be intent to hear and see. /We/ should not strive to impose the structures of /our/ own mind/s/, /our/systems of thought upon reality. . . . At the beginning of all spiritual endeavor stands humility and /whoever/loses it can achieve no other heights than the heights of disillusionment."

We are surrounded by disillusioned people, frightenedly zealous people, people who have forgotten that they can cooperate with change by writing their own stories, because they have forgotten that story is the prime vehicle of truth.

Laurens van der Post says of the Kalahari Bushman, "The supreme expression of his spirit was in his story. He was a wonderful story teller. The story was his most sacred possession. These people knew what we do not: that without a story you have not got a nation, or a culture, or a civilization. Without a story of your own to live you haven't got a life of your own."

We who work with and for children are more like the Kalahari Bushpeople than those who limit themselves to the pragmatic Cartesian world of provable fact, and who can thus fool themselves into thinking they have a right to burn books. We, like the Kalahari, *know* that we have a story to live, and a story to share with everybody we meet. We are riders of butterflies, and that is the sign of hope we need, and need desperately. Our story is indeed our most sacred possession, and it is up to all of us to keep it alive. I believe we can do it.

Note

1. As readers of *A Wrinkle in Time* will recall, tessering describes a method of moving into a different time and space dimension. —Ed.

References

L'Engle, Madeleine. *A wrinkle in time.* New York: Farrar, Straus, 1962.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *A wind in the door.* New York: Farrar, Straus, 1973.

McCarthy, Mary. *The Group.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1963.

INDEX TO VOLUME XXI

Adequate Social Science, Curriculum Investigations, and Theory. Jean Anyon, 34-37.

Aim of the Writer Who Writes for Children, The. Katherine Paterson, 325-331.

Anderson, Charlotte C. Global Education in the Classroom, 168-176.

Anderson, Lee F. Why Should American Education be Globalized? It's a Nonsensical Question, 155-161.

Anyon, Jean. Adequate Social Science, Curriculum Investigations, and Theory, 34-37.

Applied Behavior Analysis in Education. John O. Cooper, 114-118.

Attainable Global Perspective, An. Robert G. Hanvey, 162-167.

Barone, Tom. Insinuated Theory from Curricula-in-Use, 38-43.

Beauchamp, George A. Curriculum Theory: Meaning, Development, and Use, 23-27.

Becker, James M. Goals for Global Education, 228-233.

Birthdays and Beginnings. Arnold Lobel, 322-324.

Blackhurst, A. Edward. Competencies for Teaching Mainstreamed Students, 139-143.

"Book Was Okay, The. I Love You" — Social Aspects of Response to Literature. Susan I. Hepler and Janet Hickman, 278-283.

Butler, Dorothy. Reading Begins at Home, 308-314.

Carlton, Glenn R., and Kabler, Michael L. Educating Exceptional Students: A Comprehensive Team Approach, 88-96.

Cherryholmes, Cleo H. What is Curriculum Theory? A Special Problem in Social Theory, 28-33.

Community-Based Approach to Global Education, A. Robert B. Woyach and Richard C. Remy, 177-183.

Competencies for Teaching Mainstreamed Students. A. Edward Blackhurst, 139-143.

Cooper, John O. Applied Behavior Analysis in Education, 114-118.

Cross-Cultural Experiental Learning for Teachers. Angene H. Wilson, 184-192.

Curriculum Theory as Metaphor. Herbert M. Kliebard, 11-17.

Curriculum Theory Is Many Things to Many People. Decker F. Walker, 62-65.

Curriculum Theory: Meaning, Development, and Use. George A. Beauchamp, 23-27.

d'Almeida, Irene Assiba. The Meaning and Status of International Studies in West-African Schools, 193-199.

Defining a Good Children's Book: A Task Doomed. Stephen Roxburgh, 262-263.

Defining a Good Children's Book: Believing Impossible Things. Madeleine L'Engle, 264-265.

Defining a Good Children's Book: Discovering Good (New) Books through a Discussion Format. Ginny Moore Kruse, 265-267.

Defining a Good Children's Book: Something That Makes Childhood Less Lonely. Charlotte Zolotow, 263-264.

Developing a Global Dimension in Teacher Education: The Florida International University Experience. Jan L. Tucker, 212-217.

Edifying Theory: Serving the Good. Max van Manen, 44-49.

Editor's View, An: Recognizing the Best. Jean Karl, 254-261.

Educating Exceptional Students: A Comprehensive Team Approach. Michael L. Kabler and Glenn R. Carlton, 88-96.

Education for International Understanding: A View from Britain. Derek Heater, 218-223.

Education of Exceptional Children in Perspective. Thomas M. Stephens, 71-76.

Egoff, Sheila. "Which One's the Mockingbird?" Children's Literature from the 1920s to the Present, 239-246.

Frew, Thomas W., and Klein, Nancy K. Instructional Models for Children with Special Needs, 97-105.

Global Awareness Survey, The: Implications for Teacher Education. Judith Torney-Purta, 200-205.

Global Education: A Report on Developments in Western Europe. Edmund O'Connor, 224-227.

Global Education in the Classroom. Charlotte C. Anderson, 168-176.

"Go, and Catch a Falling Star": What *Is* a Good Children's Book? Ethel L. Heins, 247-253.

Goals for Global Education. James M. Becker, 228-233.

Goodman, Yetta M. Retellings of Literature and the Comprehension Process, 301-307.

Gresham, Frank M. Social Skills Instruction for Exceptional Children, 129-133.

Grumet, Madeleine R., and Pinar, William F. Socratic *Caesura* and the Theory-Practice Relationship, 50-54.

Hanvey, Robert G. An Attainable Global Perspective, 162-167.

Haring, Norris G., and Hutchinson, Thomas A. Serving Exceptional Individuals, 82-87.

Heater, Derek. Education for International Understanding: A View from Britain, 218-223.

Heins, Ethel L. "Go, and Catch a Falling Star": What *Is* a Good Children's Book, 247-253.

Hepler, Susan I., and Hickman, Janet. "The Book Was Okay. I Love You" — Social Aspects of Response to Literature, 278-283.

Hickman, Janet, and Hepler, Susan I. "The Book Was Okay. I Love You" — Social Aspects of Response to Literature, 278-283.

Holdaway, Don. Shared Book Experience: Teaching Reading Using Favorite Books, 293-300.

How Literal Is Curriculum Theory? James B. Macdonald, 55-61.

Huck, Charlotte. "I Give You the End of a Golden String," 315-321.

Huck, Charlotte. This Issue (Children's Literature), 238.

Hutchinson, Thomas A., and Haring, Norris G. Serving Exceptional Individuals, 82-87.

"I Give You the End of a Golden String." Charlotte Huck, 315-321.

Insinuated Theory from Curricula-in-Use. Tom Barone, 38-43.

Instructional Models for Children with Special Needs. Thomas W. Frew and Nancy K. Klein, 97-105.

Joseph, Ellis A. The Task Force as an Instrument for Personnel Planning for the Handicapped, 134-138.

Kabler, Michael L., and Carlton, Glenn R. Educating Exceptional Students: A Comprehensive Team Approach, 88-96.

Karl, Jean. An Editor's View: Recognizing the Best, 254-261.

Karlitz, Howard. P.L. 94-142 and Teachers Unions: A Case for Labor Sensitized Policy Design, 144-149.
Klein, Nancy K., and Frew, Thomas W. Instructional Models for Children With Special Needs, 97-105.
Kliebard, Herbert M. Curriculum Theory as Metaphor, 11-17.
Kruse, Ginny Moore. Defining a Good Children's Book: Discovering Good (New) Books through a Discussion Format, 265-267.
Lamy, Steven L. Teacher Training in Global Perspectives Education: The Center for Teaching International Relations, 206-211.
L'Engle, Madeleine. Defining a Good Children's Book: Believing Impossible Things, 264-265.
L'Engle, Madeleine. Subject to Change without Notice, 332-336.
Literary Transaction, The: Evocation and Response. Louise M. Rosenblatt, 268-277.
Lobel, Arnold. Birthdays and Beginnings, 322-324.
Macdonald, James B. How Literal is Curriculum Theory? 55-61.
Magliocca, Larry A., and Rinaldi, Robert T. Multi-Factored Assessment for the Handicapped, 106-113.
McCutcheon, Gail. This Issue (Curriculum Theory), 2-3.
McCutcheon, Gail. What in the World is Curriculum Theory? 18-22.
Meaning and Status of International Studies in West-African Schools, The. d'Almeida, Irene Assiba, 193-199.
Meek, Margaret. What Counts as Evidence in Theories of Children's Literature? 284-292.
Multi-Factored Assessment for the Handicapped. Larry A. Magliocca and Robert T. Rinaldi, 106-113.
O'Connor, Edmund. Global Education: A Report on Developments in Western Europe, 224-227.
P.L. 94-142 and Teachers Unions: A Case for Labor Sensitized Policy Design. Howard Karlitz, 144-149.
Parents as Partners in Exceptional Education. Joan S. Wolf, 77-81.
Paterson, Katherine. The Aim of the Writer Who Writes for Children, 325-331.
Pinar, William F., and Grumet, Madeleine R. Socratic *Caesura* and the Theory-Practice Relationship, 50-54.
Practical Uses of Curriculum Theory, The. Elizabeth Vallance, 4-10.
Reading Begins at Home. Dorothy Butler, 308-314.
Remy, Richard C. This Issue (Global Education), 154.
Remy, Richard C., and Woyach, Robert B. A Community-Based Approach to Global Education, 177-183.
Retellings of Literature and the Comprehension Process. Yetta M. Goodman, 301-307.
Rinaldi, Robert T., and Magliocca, Larry A. Multi-Factored Assessment for the Handicapped, 106-113.
Rosenblatt, Louise M. The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response, 268-277.
Roxburgh, Stephen. Defining a Good Children's Book: A Task Doomed, 262-263.
Serving Exceptional Individuals. Thomas A. Hutchinson and Norris G. Haring, 82-87.
Shared Book Experience: Teaching Reading Using Favorite Books. Don Holdaway, 293-300.
Social Skills Instruction for Exceptional Children. Frank M. Gresham, 129-133.
Socratic *Caesura* and the Theory-Practice Relationship. William F. Pinar and Madeleine R. Grumet, 50-54.
Stephens, Thomas M. Education of Exceptional Children in Perspective, 71-76.
Stephens, Thomas M. This Issue (Exceptional Children in the Schools), 70.
Subject to Change without Notice. Madeleine L'Engle, 332-336.
Task Force as an Instrument for Personnel Planning for the Handicapped, The. Ellis A. Joseph, 134-138.
Teacher Training in Global Perspectives Education: The Center for Teaching International Relations. Steven L. Lamy, 206-211.
Technical Assistance and the Improvement of Services to Exceptional Children. Pascal Louis Trohanis, 119-128.
This Issue (Curriculum Theory). Gail McCutcheon, 2-3.
This Issue (Exceptional Children in the Schools). Thomas M. Stephens, 70.
This Issue (Global Education). Richard C. Remy, 154.
This Issue (Children's Literature). Charlotte Huck, 238.
Torney-Purta, Judith. The Global Awareness Survey: Implications for Teacher Education, 200-205.
Trohanis, Pascal Louis. Technical Assistance and the Improvement of Services to Exceptional Children, 119-128.
Tucker, Jan L. Developing a Global Dimension in Teacher Education: The Florida International University Experience, 212-217.
Vallance, Elizabeth. The Practical Uses of Curriculum Theory, 4-10.
van Manen, Max. Edifying Theory: Serving the Good, 44-49.
Walker, Decker F. Curriculum Theory Is Many Things to Many People, 62-65.
What Counts as Evidence in Theories of Children's Literature? Margaret Meek, 284-292.
What in the World is Curriculum Theory? Gail McCutcheon, 18-22.
What is Curriculum Theory? A Special Problem in Social Theory. Cleo H. Cherryholmes, 28-33.
"Which One's the Mockingbird?" Children's Literature from the 1920s to the Present. Sheila Egoff, 239-246.
Why Should American Education be Globalized? It's a Nonsensical Question. Lee F. Anderson, 155-161.
Wilson, Angene H. Cross-Cultural Experiential Learning for Teachers, 184-192.
Wolf, Joan S. Parents as Partners in Exceptional Education, 77-81.
Woyach, Robert B., and Remy, Richard C. A Community-Based Approach to Global Education, 177-183.
Zolotow, Charlotte. Defining A Good Children's Book: Something That Makes Childhood Less Lonely, 263-264.

tip

tip

Volume XXI, Number 4, Autumn 1982

Theory into Practice is published four times a year as a journal of the College of Education, The Ohio State University. It has been nationally recognized for excellence in the field of educational journalism. ***TIP*** utilizes a thematic format, each issue providing a comprehensive discussion of a single topic, with as many diverse points of view represented as possible. The goal is to stage a forum for the creation of an educational literature which represents the highest quality and excellence in a field of inquiry.

Subscription cost is $15.00 a year (four issues), $29.00 for two years. Single copies are $4.50 each. Discounts are given for quantity orders.

Subscription and single copies may be ordered from 140 Arps Hall, 1945 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43210; (614) 422-2801.

Editorial offices are located in 101 Ramseyer Hall, 29 W. Woodruff Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43210.

Copyright © 1982 by the College of Education, The Ohio State University. All rights reserved.

Second-class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio (ISSN 0040-5841).

Postmaster: Send address changes to ***Theory Into Practice,*** 149 Arps Hall, 1945 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43210.

CHARLES M. GALLOWAY, editor
MARJORY CORT SELTZER, managing editor
JAMES E. KERBER, associate editor
LONNIE H. WAGSTAFF, associate editor
LESTER S. SMITH, business manager

Cover design by Lou Treboni

OSU

The Ohio State University